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LOVE ME FOR MY LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"FLIRTS AND FLIRTS," "ONE FOOT ON SHORE."

"Everything in this world has its price, and the price buys *that*, not something else. Every harvest demands its own preparation, and that preparation will not produce another sort of harvest.—ROBERTSON'S SERMONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LOVE ME FOR MY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

FAVERSHAM COTTAGE.—INTRODUCTORY.

FAVERSHAM COTTAGE was the old lodge of Faversham House, the old lodge with modern additions and improvements, enlarged out of all knowing as a lodge, yet still as different from Faversham House as the villa to which my lady goes for a few weeks' sea-bathing from the stately mansion at which my lord and my lady together entertain their friends during the hunting season. Faversham House was a grand old Irish palace, built with true Irish carelessness as to the value of space, and objectionableness of draughty

passages; Faversham Cottage was even yet little more than a cottage *ornée*. Nevertheless, it was there, that the present Lord Faversham not only elected to live himself, but elected also to receive his friends. The present Lord Faversham, like all the other Favershams within the memory of man, was weakly, and he dreaded the spacious north drawing-rooms and long, lofty passages of Faversham House; he dreaded them yet more after one or two years of enforced absenteeism in warm southern latitudes: but perhaps he would never have had sufficient energy to enlarge the sunny little lodge, with its southern exposure, into a dwelling-place for himself, had he not in one of his winters abroad taken unto himself a wife, who also shrank from draughts and cold, and suffered from them nearly as much as he did himself.

The young Lady Faversham was a slight,

fragile girl when she first came to Faversham—a girl possessed of no particular beauty, save that of having singularly small, pretty feet, and large dark eyes, with a soft, melancholy expression; but being introduced among them as a young Countess, the kindly-hearted Irish girls, with blue eyes ever laughing bewitchingly under long o'ershadowing lashes, each sought who could find out most charms in the girl who had been thus raised above them all by the young Earl, who might have had the choice among so much beauty, had he been contented to take a bride from his own county. These Irish girls, who were all so much prettier than she was, nevertheless chose to assert that there was a certain charm about Lady Faversham, which they themselves could not pretend to define, but which they declared they were always conscious of, while in her presence. They would gladly enough have made friends with her,

and called her "darling," in their friendly Irish fashion, only there was also a certain dignity about her which restrained them from making too rapid advances. Perhaps it was her melancholy expression, anyhow, there was something that prevented the young Countess from becoming friends with any of her Irish neighbours. Yet nobody disliked her, and though she was known to have been only the daughter of a commoner, and almost penniless, when Lord Faversham married her, no one ever accused her of having used any undue arts to win his affections, or even hinted that her relations had used any for her. Indeed, she was known to have hardly any relations of her own; she was an orphan at the time of her marriage, and since she had become Lady Faversham, no relation or even old friend of hers had ever come to stay at Faversham Cottage, or Faversham, as it was more often called now, usurping to itself

the name of the grand old house, just as it had before usurped so many of the comforts and little adornments that had of old time belonged as of right to its stately neighbour.

Thus, when one spring it was announced that Lady Faversham's particular friend was coming to stay with her, it made rather a sensation in the neighbourhood—a sensation that was not at all diminished, when it became known that this particular friend was the Hon. Kathleen O'Grady, a celebrated London beauty, and daughter of the late Lord Killowen, whose estate was in the same county as that of Lord Faversham. It excited no little surprise also that this wonderful beauty should be expected to leave the scene of her triumphs early in July, and to come and rusticate, as it were, at Faversham; but Kathleen O'Grady and Sybil Mordaunt—such had been Lady Faversham's

name before her marriage—had been no ordinary friends to each other, and though they had not met since the latter's marriage, it was with a certainty of its being accepted that Lady Faversham wrote to Kathleen an invitation to come to Ireland, and spend a few weeks with her and her husband. Five years before the two girls had seen a great deal of each other, while spending the autumn at Ryde, and ever since that time, though Lady Faversham had entertained many wishes for herself and her husband, she had ever cherished but one wish, one slightly romantic wish, for her early friend: for she and Kathleen had been friends before they had met at Ryde, though never such dear friends as after that second meeting, and their daily intercourse during the one or two months they spent together there.

Lady Faversham had herself at that time

been in love with Kathleen's cousin, Sandy Beaumont. She had long ago conquered that early fancy, and since then she had become Lord Faversham's wife, and been to him as true and loving a wife as ever woman was; but she had still a great tenderness for the man whom she had once loved almost passionately. So now the desire of her heart was that Sandy Beaumont should be made happy by a marriage with his cousin, Kathleen O'Grady.

For in the old days, when they had all been together at Ryde, and Sybil Mordaunt had been in love with Sandy Beaumont herself, she had always known, only too well, that he loved his cousin, and she knew that it was owing to some misunderstanding with her, some idea that she was going to marry another, that he had suddenly thrown up his commission, and gone off to Australia without even delaying sufficiently to say good-

bye to his friends. The son of a man who had run through his money at rather an extra-quick pace, it would then have been almost impossible for him to have married his beautiful cousin, even could she at that time have brought herself to wish it, and of the possibility or impossibility of this Sybil had never been able to assure herself. But during the last five years great things had happened to Sandy Beaumont. His English friends did not know quite how it had all come about, but they knew he had returned home possessed of immense wealth; and not long after he had arrived in England, Lord Faversham had asked him to come and stay at Faversham for a few weeks, and it was on his accepting this invitation that Sybil had written to her friend, his cousin, asking her to leave the London gaieties for a little, and come down to them at the Cottage, feeling quite sure that this invitation would be

accepted: for whether or no Kathleen could ever have made up her mind to marry Sandy before he had left the army, and gone out to Australia, all for love of her, and come back again with a fortune, yet Sybil knew well enough that there was no one in the whole world Kathleen cared for, as she now cared for her cousin, Sandy Beaumont. She knew that Kathleen thought of him now as the only man she had ever really loved, and she believed it was for his sake that the much-sought-after young beauty had so long remained single. Indeed, from the tenour of Kathleen's last letters, Sybil feared that she was now suffering life to become a weary burden to her, because, though he had returned from Australia, Sandy Beaumont had not at once hastened to claim her as his bride, nor had as yet taken any, the least, notice of her or her mother, Lady Killowen, although in old days he had always been

accustomed to go home to Killowen for his holidays, and had been treated there almost, if not quite, as a son of the house; but then Sandy had left England in anger with Kathleen and her mother, and it seemed that in all the years he had been away, he had not forgotten this, but forgotten only the old affection he had been wont to feel for them.

If the little world round Faversham had known all about it, as people never do know *all* about their neighbours' concerns, they would have been far more surprised at Lady Faversham's invitation of Kathleen, than they were now at the latter's acceptance of it: for when Sybil and Kathleen had last been together, Lord Faversham had been very desperately in love with the Irish beauty—so desperately, indeed, that he had been very near dying on her refusal of him, and it was only in consequence of the illness

brought on by his sorrow that he had spent the winter in the little island of Madeira, almost equally celebrated then for its wonder-working climate as it was still longer ago for its nectar-like wines. There he had again met Sybil Mordaunt, and with the elasticity of youthful feelings, he had quickly transferred his affections to her. Neither he nor Sybil had ever seen Kathleen since, and many people would have told the young wife that it was a dangerous experiment she was trying, bringing her husband and his old love together under the same roof in such close and familiar intercourse as must necessarily ensue between them in the small home-circle of Faversham Cottage. But Lady Faversham did not belong to the fast school, after all not so numerous as conspicuous even in these days, and she had no more idea that it was any more possible for her husband now to prefer

Kathleen to herself, than for herself to go back and care for Sandy Beaumont in the mad way in which she had once cared for him, endowing him in her imagination with all those romantic qualities which a girl thinks admirable in a man. Sybil had now a great regard for Sandy Beaumont, a great regard and a great respect; if she could have spoken out her thoughts in naked truthfulness, she would probably have been forced to own that she still believed Sandy to have a finer manlier character than the man she had married; but she was herself in perfect unconsciousness of this, and she was Lord Faversham's wife now, and nearer the danger of caring too much for him and his interests to the exclusion of all other interests, than to the very opposite danger of caring more for some other man. On his part, Lord Faversham had certainly never given his wife cause to feel any

jealousy. As a boy he had fallen in love with the beautiful Kathleen O'Grady, and it was partly because Sybil was her friend, and partly the reaction from his passion, causing him to fall in love with the exact opposite to Miss O'Grady, that had made him in the first instance take to Sybil Mordaunt.

Men generally did not much respect Lord Faversham. They saw he was good looking, with that kind of beauty which led many people even now to talk of him as a pretty boy, and so they took it for granted that he was vain. They saw that he shot but little, and hunted never—being, indeed, incapacitated by health from joining in either of these pursuits; and they were ready enough to pronounce him a muff.

But Lord Faversham was neither a muff nor vain. A little weak, perhaps, in mind as well as body, a little too fond, perhaps,

of the society of women in preference to that of men, but with something very chivalrous about him that led women to grow rather hot in their dissent from the opinion men mostly expressed of him. Not but that men liked him too, in spite of their contempt for the young Earl's want of manliness, as they esteemed it; and some men—the few who had known him for many years—felt anything but contempt for Lord Faversham. They knew that never in his life had he done anything that could be called dirty or dishonourable. They knew that they would trust whatever they valued most—were it property, or wife, or child—in Lord Faversham's keeping as soon as in that of any man. These men would have told Lady Faversham that she was not even risking anything when she asked her old friend and her husband's first love to spend several weeks with her in her husband's house.

Lord Faversham's health might cause his wife great anxiety, he might try her patience at times by being fretful or fidgety; but as long as he lived she could never suffer from any want of love; nor would he ever insult any woman—least of all a woman he had once fancied he loved, by any pretence of giving her the love that was now his wife's, and hers alone.

It was on a Thursday evening that Miss O'Grady was expected at Faversham Cottage, no other guest was to arrive till the next day; and it so happened Lady Faversham was on that afternoon in some anxiety about her eldest child, who had been feverish all the morning.

"I don't think I quite like to leave Milly," she said, as it drew near the time to go to the station. "Do you mind going to meet Kathleen? And then she could not think my stopping at home unkind."

Lord Faversham was sauntering about the hall, which served as billiard-room as well as hall, hardly even knocking the balls about, though he had a cue in his hand, as his wife thus spoke.

"I believe you have got a monomania about health," he said. "Milly looked all right yesterday."

"I daresay it is my fancy," replied Sybil, yielding at once, as she always yielded in appearance, in a manner that made it very difficult for her husband to gainsay her wishes, seeing she never gainsaid his opinions.

"I'll go, if you like, of course. Only, I may as well take the dog-cart if I do, or won't that look the proper thing?"

"Yes; I should think so," said Sybil gravely; evidently her mind was still with her sick child, but even as she spoke, she moved, and taking down her husband's coat,

placed it in a conspicuous situation, as a sort of gentle reminder against his going out.

"Oh! it is quite warm to-day, I shan't want my coat," said Lord Faversham, devoting himself to the billiard balls again.

"It often turns cold towards evening," replied Sybil. "Give my love to Kathleen, and tell her why I don't go to meet her, please. Thank you so much for going."

"It is no trouble to me," replied her husband, turning round, but as she spoke Sybil had left him: so seeing himself alone he sauntered to the hall-door, and looking out, gave himself up to his thoughts.

It was a pretty view enough that Lord Faversham saw from the hall-door of the Cottage; the ground sloped rather [sharply away at first, so as to afford an almost uninterrupted view of a lake at the foot of the little hill, on which the Cottage was situated. On

the lake two swans were usually to be seen, gravely admiring their own beauty as reflected from its glassy surface, or taking refuge in the pretty little island at its further end. Beyond the lake there were softly-rounded tree tops, and beyond the trees prettily-wooded hills in the distance, that was yet not so very distant, for the view was more artistic than extensive on this side of Faversham Cottage. Apparently the young Earl did not now derive any great satisfaction from the prospect, for he soon turned away from the door, and walked from the hall into the passage that ran all the length of the ground floor of the Cottage, turning thence into the first of the three sitting-rooms, which, opening into each other through folding-doors, made the cottage as comfortable, as far as sitting-rooms went, as many a larger house. He seemed to be looking for some one, but as the three sitting-rooms were now

untenanted, Lord Faversham, after passing hastily through them, returned listlessly to the middle room, and taking up a Review, threw himself upon a sofa. As the boy Earl lies there—for he is hardly more than a boy yet, though he has been four years married—let us take the opportunity of examining more closely into his personal appearance.

Lord Faversham is under the middle height, yet so slightly made, as hardly to look short; his hands and feet are small, and in whatever attitude he may be—and, perhaps, he is a trifle too much given to those that are easy and lounging—he always bears himself like a gentleman; but his face is certainly his best point. A girlish pink and white complexion, bright blue eyes, and fine, though untidy looking, gold brown hair, that never will lie straight, and yet has been never known to curl, having generally rather a ragged appearance; these are, perhaps, the first

things to strike any one looking at him, as he now lies listlessly turning over the pages of his Review; but his features though hardly decided enough for a man, are perfectly regular and well shaped, and when his face lights up, as it generally does in conversation, it would not be easy to pick out a more pleasing countenance than that of the young Earl. As a boy he was often likened to a cherub, and this likeness has not quite deserted him yet, though his boyish beauty has a little passed away, and would, perhaps, quite have left him, had it not been for the delicacy of colouring that consumption so often stamps upon its victims.

But whilst we have been describing him, Lord Faversham had already risen again from the sofa, throwing down the Review with that careless contempt which we all of us are too apt to show towards other men's thoughts. Lord Faversham was restless on

this afternoon, as it was often his way to be restless, and it now occurred to him that it was quite time for him to go to meet Miss O'Grady, if he ever were going; so he rang the bell, and began ordering the dog-cart, instead of the pony-carriage, in which Lady Faversham had intended meeting her friend.

"The cart has already gone for the luggage, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord, and her ladyship has already countermanded the pony-carriage. The dog-cart is at the door now."

Then Lord Faversham had no further excuse for dawdling about, and going out gathered up the reins, and drove off to meet his old love, whose rejection of him had once gone very near to break his heart. It seemed to Lord Faversham a strange position, this in which he was placed on that July afternoon; and, truth to tell, he did not much like it. He had shrunk from putting any obstacle

in the way of his wife's wishes, when she had first proposed inviting Miss O'Grady to visit them, but even then he had not liked the idea of meeting his old love again, and now as the time drew nearer, he liked the idea still less. To no man can it be pleasant to be reminded of the time when he made a fool of himself, and a man violently in love is very apt to make a fool of himself. Lord Faversham was of opinion that he had made a very great fool of himself, when he had been in love with Miss O'Grady, and he thought that her presence would remind him very forcibly of this; still it had to be endured now, so he drove on to the station, and having arrived there, had quite time to grow impatient for the arrival of the train before there were any signs of its approach. At last the whistle was heard, and in a few moments the long train was filling up the little station, stopping only a minute or two

to allow of the descent of the Hon. Kathleen O'Grady, her maid, and her boxes, for very rarely did any one alight at Faversham, except those who were bound for the Cottage.

Almost before he knew what he was doing, Lord Faversham had shaken hands with Miss O'Grady, and was inquiring after her boxes, alarmingly numerous, as was only to be expected. The next moment he was helping Kathleen into the dog-cart, and sitting down beside her himself; then they drove off, the maid established in the back seat as a *chaperone* if any were necessary, but as she was a foreigner, her presence did not much affect the *tête-à-tête*. Lord Faversham had hoped before hand that Miss O'Grady would not refer to the old love passages between them, but in hoping this he had quite left out of consideration the peculiar character of the far-famed beauty. As it was, she had hardly inquired after

Sybil, and listened to her message about her sick child, before she was saying in her deep rich tones:

"Dear Sybil, how strange it seems that she should be your wife! Of course you two have got quite accustomed to the idea by this time, but who would have thought it, when we were last all together, and she used to preach me such dear little sermons about my cruelty to you?"

"Did she?" said Lord Faversham, with a sort of quiver in his voice, and a twinkle about the blue eyes, that seemed verging on a smile. "Well, you were very cruel."

"Yes, I know I was," replied Kathleen, quite gravely. "I behaved as badly to you as I always have to every man who has ever been fool enough to care for me; but fortunately it does not do them much harm. Here are you as happy as possible, with the best and dearest girl in the world for your wife, while

I ——" and she broke off with a heavy sigh and heightened colour.

Lord Faversham looked round into her beautiful face, more beautiful than ever, as he was obliged to acknowledge to himself, while thus looking into it, though its beauty roused none of the emotion in his heart now that once it had been wont to excite. "You are not happy?" he said quietly.

"Happy!" exclaimed Miss O'Grady, speaking with the *abandon* that always formed one of the principal charms of her conversation. "How can any one be happy who only lives in the present? I cannot think of the past, and I dare not think of the future. I have not a friend in the world except Sybil, and if she only knew what I really am, she would never care to speak to me again, nor ever have dreamt of asking me here."

"I don't think that," said Lord Faversham, gravely. Then he added with a little air of

dignity, that sat well on his boyish features, "Both my wife and I have long wished to see you, and we should both have been much disappointed if you could not have come to us."

"I believe every one thinks me mad to have done so," said Kathleen shortly, after a moment's pause, during which she had quite taken in the force of that "both my wife and I." Indeed she had understood a great deal more by it than Lord Faversham had ever meant. "Nobody could understand why I was leaving town at such a time, but I am so weary of the whole thing."

"I should think you must be," said Lord Faversham, compassionately. "I don't think I could stand a London season myself."

Then he had to get down to open the gate, for the old lodge having been changed into a dwelling-house there was as yet no other

lodge to supply its place, and in a minute or two more they had driven up the steep approach to the Cottage, and Lord Faversham was handing Kathleen out, and conducting her to the little circular room at the top of the staircase, that served as Lady Faversham's boudoir, and where she joined them in a moment.

"She is handsomer than ever," exclaimed Sybil, as she bent again over her now sleeping child, after Kathleen had retired to her own room to prepare for dinner. Lord Faversham had gone with her to see little Milly, and he bent over the child also, without answering his wife's remark.

"Milly will do nicely now, I am sure," he said; "you need not be anxious any more about her; need you, Sybil?"

"No;" and Lady Faversham smiled her soft quiet smile. "I suppose I was very silly to be so anxious before, but I always

have been given to worrying myself, as Kathleen says. I wish I could learn indifference to trifles from her."

"I don't," said Lord Faversham, earnestly. "I don't know that there is anything I am more glad of than that she refused me long ago," he added, as he saw his wife looking at him with her large dark eyes opened to their fullest extent, at hearing him speak thus earnestly; for the young Earl, Irish though he was, had all an Englishman's reserve, and very rarely expressed more than a tenth part of what he felt. "Not even that you accepted me, though I don't know about that," he added, with his pretty boyish smile. "But I did so wish to marry her once, and I think I might have been happy, if I had, too, in a way; but what a wretched creature I should have grown into by this time! I had rather be miserable than be the slave of any woman's caprices, as I should have been of Miss

O'Grady's, if she had ever condescended to become my wife."

"You would never have suited each other," said Sybil, gently; and as she spoke, she took hold of her husband's hand caressingly. That was her only sign of endearment; she was not given to kissing, but she would often take hold of the hand of any one she loved, and stroke it softly and tenderly. But Lord Faversham was not always satisfied with so small an outward sign as this, and he kissed his wife very fondly now.

"Dearest Sybil," he said, and then they both went to dress for dinner, and prepare for spending the evening with Kathleen O'Grady, already well known as a beauty in more than one capital of Europe.

CHAPTER II.

CHANGED?

NEXT day Lord Faversham had again to drive to the station, and when the train arrived, he saw a fair-bearded man alight, to whom he called out with great cordiality: "How are you, Beaumont, old fellow?" He remained sitting in the dog-cart this time, not thinking it necessary to get out to assist this new comer with his luggage, as he had thought it necessary on the occasion of his meeting the great London beauty the day before.

Sandy Beaumont's luggage seemed indeed to be of a very different order, and was certainly of very different bulk from that of his fair cousin; but if there was a difference

in the luggage, there was yet a greater difference in the personal appearance of the two guests at Faversham Cottage.

Sandy Beaumont had never been good looking, and a few years in the Australian Bush had not done anything towards beautifying him. He was filled out now from what he had been when he went out there a mere lad, but he had always been squarely made, and this did not alter him so much as the change in his expression since Lord Faversham had last seen him. As a lad, a young subaltern in rather a crack line-regiment, he had been remarkable for an air of unmixed *bonhomie*, now his expression was rather stolid than otherwise, and he looked like a man who had, somehow or another, lost himself at some previous period of his life, and who had never been able to find his old self again. This expression was to a certain extent carried out by the thick beard of a light

colour, slightly tinged with red, which stamped him, if anything else had been needed to do so, as a man home from the colonies; for Sandy Beaumont took very decidedly the impress of the surroundings among which he found himself. Perhaps it was because he worked so thoroughly heart and soul at whatever he took in hand, anyhow just as of old when he had belonged to the army, he had looked every inch a soldier, so now he looked equally unmistakably a colonist, not handsome at all, not even a gentleman at the first glance, perhaps, but most certainly and undoubtedly a colonist. Yet though he hardly looked so decidedly a gentleman that any casual observer would have pronounced him such, yet hardly any one, even judging from his personal appearance alone, and without hearing him speak, could ever have dared to assert that he was not a gentleman; for there was a look of power about Sandy

Beaumont, such as it is very rare to meet among the lower orders, unless in its inferior form as obstinacy, and Sandy did not look obstinate. Neither had he the least a dare-devil air, he only looked the sort of man who would always do anything he wanted done, and would always get other people to carry out anything he wanted carried out.

"Half an hour late, I believe. I hope you have not been waiting long," he said now, as he walked up to the dog-cart with a carpet-bag in his hand, and an enormous Newfoundland following at his heels.

"No, nothing more than usual. We know the ways of our trains. So you have got your old dog with you still! How are you, Rover—don't you know me again?" and Lord Faversham bent down to pat the great shaggy head, but the dog seemed to have grown graver as well as his master, and though he looked at the young Earl with

earnest, intelligent eyes, he made no sign of joy at the recognition.

"There, you see that is the beginning of my land," said Lord Faversham, with the usual pride of a proprietor in his own possessions, after they had driven a few yards from the station. "You've got no end of a property in Australia yourself, now, have not you?"

"Yes, a largish property," said Sandy, slowly looking round at Lord Faversham's territories rather as if he felt it was now his somewhat disagreeable duty to take stock of the whole concern.

"I don't understand how you got it, though. Tell me the story. You were lucky from the first, were not you?"

"Pretty well. I was getting on pretty steadily; might have had what you luxurious stay-at-home people call enough to live upon in another ten years or so, when one

day I put up for the night at a far away station in a stranger's hut—you know there are no inns in the Bush, so that one just sleeps wherever one can get shelter—and I found the fellow who owned it so seedy that I did not like to leave him, as I should otherwise have done the next morning; so I stayed on for pretty near a month, nursing him through a fever. As the poor wretch was getting better, he told me his story—the sort of story that sickens a man of life, and makes him think the world just the worst world possible. I had known nothing of who he was at first, but he had told me the name he bore after a few days, and from that I knew he was an immensely wealthy Australian, of whom, notwithstanding his wealth, there were such suspicions afloat, that no one cared to be friends with him. It came out now that he was a convict of the worst kind; but of course I could not leave him to die for

all that, so I just nursed him till he could get about again, and then I left him—and glad enough I was to do so—and I went back to my own work and thought no more of him, except that every now and then a sickening feeling came over me that I had helped such a wretch to live. It was about two years after that, I got a letter from a lawyer at Sydney, telling me a large property had been left me, and asking me to come down and settle about it. When I arrived in Sydney, I found it was indeed a large property, for this wretched man had left me all he had."

"Had he no relations to dispute the will?"

"No; from the nature of his story I knew there could be no one living in England with a right to the property, and, clever fellow though he was, and he must have been immensely clever, he had never made

a friend of any kind all the time he had been in Australia. Poor fellow, it was rather dreadful to read his will! He said there was only one human being who had ever shown him a kindness, only one man who had not treated him as his natural enemy, and therefore to that man he left his property. He had never quite got over the fever in which I nursed him, it seemed, and of course, in his weak state, he had grown greatly to overrate what little I had done for him, and it seems what really touched him was my not leaving him when I knew his story, nor ever referring to it again; but it is terrible to think that a man should live to be grey headed, and then die declaring he recollected no one, who had shown him more kindness than I had shown that poor fellow."

"I should have a horror of the money, I think," said Lord Faversham, touching up

the chestnut horse he had suffered rather to drowse during Sandy's story.

"It was fairly come by," said Sandy Beaumont. "I ascertained as much as that, but I did not take to it kindly at first, and I came home partly to persuade a man, who seemed, as far as I could make out, to be the poor wretch's nearest relation, to take it, or at least some part of it. I knew writing would be no good, but I thought if I went myself and urged that, if only because of all the disgrace and misery this convict had brought upon every one connected with him, they had a sort of a right to the money he had now left behind him, I might induce him to claim it; but I found he was not to be tempted in any way to put in a claim, and he was so well off I did not feel bound to urge it much."

"Not a gentleman, surely!" interrupted Lord Faversham.

"A gentleman! Oh, yes. I had no doubt of that when I went to him, only I thought he might possibly not be as rich as he cared to be."

"But what was the name of the fellow who left you the money? I thought I heard some low sort of name."

"Blot was the name he had chosen for himself, but of course that was not his real name, which equally of course I do not feel at liberty to tell you. Indeed, his was the saddest story I think I ever heard," and as he spoke Sandy Beaumont swung himself down to open the gate for the dog-cart to pass through. "Lady Faversham is quite well, I hope?" he asked as he sprang up again.

"Quite well, thanks: you know that your cousin, Miss O'Grady, is here?"

"No, I did not know it."

Then they drove on in silence till they

reached the hall door, only, just as they were alighting there, Sandy said, "My cousin is a good deal changed, I suppose?"

"No, very little I should say; only more beautiful than ever, if possible."

"Do *you* think so, Faversham?" and Sandy turned and looked at his companion almost, but not quite anxiously, for the expression of stolidity seemed incapable of departing altogether from his face even for a moment. Still he appeared almost anxious, for Sandy Beaumont had been the young Earl's confidant during his wild love fit for Miss O'Grady, though Lord Faversham himself had never known anything of the other's love for his cousin, which he had cherished all his life till he had gone out to Australia five years before. Sandy had been so accustomed to that love—it had always been such an old story to him as long as he could remember—that it had been easy to him to

keep silent about it; but the young Earl had been noisy and demonstrative, and glad to avail himself of the first friend he came across, into whose sympathising breast he might pour all his love and his hope, his fear and his sorrow, so that Sandy had known all the ins and the outs of Lord Faversham's love-making in the old days.

"Yes, I think she is more beautiful than ever," Lord Faversham replied, with a smile; "but that makes no difference to me now, for I am as happy as possible with the best wife imaginable."

Then Sandy smiled also, quite his old smile, expressive of unaffected good humour and good will towards all the world; and as he smiled he laid his hand on the other's arm, half apologetically as it were.

"From what I used to know of Lady Faversham, I can quite fancy that she makes the best wife in the world," he said. Then

Lord Faversham showed him his room and left him to dress for dinner, which had already been put off a little, for the train by which Sandy Beaumont had come was considerably later than that, by which his cousin had arrived the day before.

When Sandy appeared in the drawing-room, and he had not taken long about his toilette, he found Lady Faversham seated alone there. She greeted him cordially enough, and without one bitter thought disturbing her friendship of the time, when she had loved him so passionately, that it would have been a pleasure to her to die, could it have served him in any way. But then being a woman she had never felt called upon to avow her feelings to himself, and so could rest happy in the conviction that Sandy Beaumont had no idea she had ever cared for him as anything more than a friend. She had hardly finished her welcome of him,

when Kathleen O'Grady entered the room. Kathleen came in from the garden, a large crimson cloak loosely gathered about her, so as partly to conceal her white evening dress, and without pausing a moment she walked across the long low drawing-room to greet her cousin, who had turned round on hearing the rustle of her dress, but had not advanced a step to meet her.

"Dearest Sandy," she said, in a voice tremulous with emotion. "Dear old boy," and laying her hands upon his shoulders she kissed him as if it were a matter of course that she should kiss him, her cousin, from whom she had now been separated for years, but whom she had once known as a brother.

Sandy Beaumont received her kiss, just stooping to receive it, as he stood there in the pleasant flower-scented Faversham drawing-room; but he did not kiss her in his turn, nor did her welcome of him seem to

give him any pleasure, and Sybil sitting by noticed this, and wishing, as she did, that these two should one day marry each other, she was almost glad to perceive Sandy's coldness towards his cousin. "He must love her, or he would have forgiven her long ago, whatever it was that they quarrelled about," she thought to herself; but still she felt a little sorrow for Kathleen, tempered with not a little wonderment at her daring in thus affectionately greeting her cousin, who seemed so little to care about greeting her in return.

But after these first words of welcome Kathleen became very silent, barely answering Lord Faversham's little well-meant attempts at conversation during dinner, till at last Sandy was again made to tell the story of how he came by his fortune; then it was Kathleen who looked across the table, and asked him, "And what do you mean to

do with your property now you have got it?"

"I don't know," said Sandy, with that expression of having lost himself becoming even more visible than usual upon his face. "I suppose I must go back to Australia and look after it in a little while."

"Oh, why?" exclaimed Lady Faversham.

"Why should you banish yourself any more?" asked Lord Faversham.

"The property is mine now, and so I suppose I owe it some duties; besides it is much more likely to increase in value, if I go to look after it myself."

"So the lust of money has grown upon you too," said Kathleen, speaking apparently carelessly, and without even troubling herself to look at her cousin.

On this Sandy glanced across the table at her, but she was sitting with her back to the

window, lighted up now by the last rays of the setting sun, and her face being thus in the shade, his eye had apparently nothing to rest upon, for it wandered out soon through the open window, and he seemed to be looking into distance as he answered, "I have not as yet found any influence more powerful than that of money; and, to my mind, to throw away the opportunity of gaining more power, is as contemptible as to neglect that which has been already acquired."

"But that is exactly what you would be doing if you went out to Australia," urged Lord Faversham. "With all these wretched Radicals springing into power on every side of us, we need every man we can get hold of to keep things together at home."

"Then you ought to be glad to get rid of me, for, as far as I know anything about it, I am a Radical myself."

There was a charm about Sandy Beau-

mont's voice: it had always been a pleasant voice, but now, whether through long years of hard solitary toil in the Bush, or whether through the mental suffering he had endured before ever bringing himself to go there, it had acquired a mellow tone, such as was very soothing to the hearer, and it must have been owing to this mellow tone that Lord Faversham did not there and then take up the glove thus unceremoniously thrown down —thrown, too, in the very presence of his servants. The Favershams were no new-fangled Constitutionalists, but Tories of the old school, and the idea that he should now be entertaining a Radical as his guest was nauseous in the last degree to the young Earl; but as it was he restrained himself, perhaps, indeed, because of the presence of the servants, who rendered all discussion of such dangerous topics undesirable, and Lady Faversham, anxious to pour oil upon the

troubled waters, hastened to change the subject.

"Do you think that wretched Mr. Blot was unhappy about his past life?" she asked, in her grave quiet tones.

"He certainly appeared to be anything but a happy man, when I first came across him; but if you mean whether he was penitent or not, he professed himself an Atheist, with how much truth, God knows. I do not believe in Atheists for my own part."

"I am glad you hold to some proper opinions," said Lord Faversham, severely.

"Just one or two," replied Sandy, and then the dessert being placed upon the table, Kathleen turned to Lady Faversham.

"Sybil, you don't want any fruit, I am sure. Come into the garden with me, won't you?"

Lady Faversham rose at once, and the two went out into the garden arm-in-arm—

the woman who had once loved Sandy Beaumont, and would still do anything that lay in her power to serve him, and the woman who did not want to do anything to serve him, could not think about that as yet, but loved him madly, blindly, and was hungering, almost fainting, for a word of kindness from his lips. Once he hungered for a word of kindness from her, but none had come; and now he spoke none. And it was Lord Faversham's eyes that followed them lovingly as the two went out arm-in-arm into the twilight to wander among the sweet-scented flowers. They took a turn or two in silence, the soft air fanning their cheeks, and whispering to them a pretty Idyll of calm and peace, and tranquil country pleasures; at last it was Kathleen who spoke, and in a voice strangely out of harmony with the scene. That contralto voice of hers knew well how to attune itself to twilight scents and sounds,

but she attempted no such attuning now as she spoke in the contemptuous tones of a *blasée* London beauty.

"Poor, dear Sandy," she said; "he is terribly altered—grown quite Bushy, is he not?" and she only half stifled a yawn as she spoke.

"Yes, quite," said Lady Faversham, in much the same careless tone. But though they thus seemed to agree, they neither of them thought so one bit. They had known Sandy well years before, and they knew it was impossible for him really to have grown Bushy, though he might appear so at first sight. Appearances might be a little against him at first; but he must in reality be the same Sandy they had known of old. Natures like his could not change, only it suited them for the moment to pronounce him Bushy, or rather it suited Kathleen, and Sybil could not at once summon up sufficient moral

courage to disagree. Now after another turn or two in silence, she spoke again. "I think we had better go in, if you don't mind; Faversham is sure to come out if he sees us staying here, and he has got a little cold already, though he hates to be reminded of it."

"You tiresome old darling," said Kathleen; "I believe you count every time he coughs, all day long."

"You see," said Sybil, apologetically, "he is so very delicate. He may be pretty well now; but he has been so very ill. I don't think you quite realize that."

Then Kathleen made no answer, for though Lord Faversham had always been delicate all his life, she knew well that it was his love for herself, and the utter hopelessness of that love, that had first made him really ill, and she wondered whether her friend were remembering this also; but if

she were, Lady Faversham was not likely to make any allusion to this, and so the two went still arm-in-arm to the drawing-room, and entered through one of the low French windows, and Kathleen sat down at the piano and sang, "Willie, we have missed you," and while she was still singing this, Lord Faversham and Sandy Beaumont came in, and Sandy went up to the piano and listened to her.

"You are very much improved in your singing," he said, as she finished, speaking very coldly.

And Kathleen turned round upon the music stool, and looked up in his face with her beautiful eyes expressing a world of feelings, such as are beyond the telling of any lips. It was all she could do to keep herself from falling at his feet, and imploring him to speak to her at least a word of kindness. He was her cousin, who had been

brought up with her as her brother, and who had of old been tenderer to her than any brother, and he had been parted from her for years, and only by his own will, and because she had threatened to marry another man, whose wife he could not bear to see her. How often she had reminded herself of this cause of quarrel between them of late. She had not married this other man, and now she looked up at her cousin, petitioning for some renewal of the old affection between them.

"Do you recollect how you used to scold me for not practising more?" she said, for once striving to repress her feelings, and speak more lightly than she felt. "Well, you see I have followed your advice while you have been away, and I have had plenty of time to improve."

She sighed as she spoke, and turned away and took another song; but she got no answer, for Sandy had already left the piano,

and was helping Lady Faversham, who was busy at her tea table. And while he handed cups about, and Sybil poured out tea, Kathleen's voice rang out rich and full, "When sparrows build, and the leaves break forth." Her voice trembled a little as she first came to the verse

"Thou didst set thy foot on the ship, and sail
To the icefields and the snow;
Thou wert sad, for thy love did nought avail,
And the end I could not know.
How could I tell I should love thee to-day,
Whom that day I held not dear?
How could I tell I should love thee away,
When I did not love thee a-near?"

but even before the end of that verse she had quite recovered herself. She sang the song well, putting all due pathos into it, and yet not tearing it to pieces; and as she left off, she turned round and said, in a voice that sounded perfectly calm and free from emotion, and yet with a sort of *trainante* tenderness in it:

"That is quite my favourite song; do

not you like it, Sybil?" Then she turned to Sandy, and said in a slightly lower tone, "Somehow I always think of you, Sandy, when I sing that song."

Sandy Beaumont was sitting near Lady Faversham's little work table, nursing his tea-cup as it were, his right elbow resting on the table, and his right hand supporting his head, so as to shield his eyes from the light, or from the too curious gaze of others. He did not move for a moment now, then he looked up as if about to say something; but Kathleen had already risen from the piano, and with her crimson cloak once more gathered about her, had wandered forth into the garden. Sandy looked after her, taking a long steady look at the massive golden plaits forming a sort of coronet round the light feathery chignon at the back of her head, at the stately carriage, and the well-developed yet graceful figure, only half concealed by the soft

folds of her cloak, then he turned to Lord Faversham, and said,

"Certainly, I have never seen any one more beautiful than my cousin. You are right, Faversham, she is very little altered."

And yet Kathleen O'Grady was altered since her cousin had last seen her. Five years before she had been a beautiful girl, now she had the higher beauty of womanhood. Five years before she had sometimes looked too flushed, sometimes too pale, now her complexion lacked perhaps something of its first youthful brilliance; but there was never any fault in particular to be found with it any longer. Perhaps it was sometimes eked out with adventitious aids, when nature was not sufficient; anyhow, the effect was always satisfactory now. Five years before Kathleen had sometimes looked more bored than was quite becoming, often more excited. Now, as a rule, her expression was just what it

should be. Her blue eyes were a trifle fuller than of old; but always with that sad soft expression that never left them even in her merriest moods, and so greatly added to her charms. Her features alone were unaltered. Still, the general impression she left upon the mind of the beholder was very much the same as that she would have left five years before, and now as then, many a man would have agreed with Sandy Beaumont, that he had never seen any one more beautiful than Kathleen O'Grady. Whether she was more or less artificial than of old, Sandy had as yet had no opportunity of judging; only, when she came in again from the moonlight, and he observed the crimson cloak once more, it occurred to him that he never recollected seeing her in crimson before, and then the velvet of the same colour binding back her golden hair, and encircling her snowy throat, caught his eye, and it struck him that her toilette

was more perfect in its minutiæ, than any he remembered her wearing. Yet it was very simple, and there was nothing conspicuous about it, that he could see at once, though he had only just returned from the bush, and knew but little of the present fashions.

"You have never asked after mother, Sandy," said Kathleen, when she came in again.

"No; where is she now?"

"I left her in town; but she said she should not care for any more season without me, so she talked of going to the seaside somewhere or other."

"To Ryde?" asked Sandy.

"No; mother hates Ryde."

"By the way, Sybil, I got a telegram from that foolish fellow Beauclerc just now, explaining why he has not turned up this afternoon," broke in Lord Faversham; "you recollect him at Ryde, don't you, Miss

O'Grady? We were expecting him by the same train that Beaumont came by, only of course when he did not turn up I took for granted he would arrive some time to-morrow. However, he seems to have thought it necessary to send a telegram about it."

"And why has he not come?" asked Sybil.

"Here is his telegram, 'Too seedy to move to-day, hope to arrive to-morrow about feeding time.' He always was such a slangy fellow. Have you seen anything of him lately, Miss O'Grady?"

"Yes; I have seen a good deal of him this season."

"I suppose you told him you were coming here, then. I couldn't think how he knew, for it was only just arranged when I went up to Dublin the other day. He flew at me from across the street looking awfully

seedy, and when I asked him to come here for a few days, and told him you had kindly promised to come, he seemed quite aware of the fact."

Sandy looked up at Kathleen with a quick interrogative glance, and Sybil caught that glance, and recollected how he had always been wont to look at his cousin in that way when he suspected her of anything. She saw at once that he now suspected Cosmo Beauclerc of being in love with Kathleen, and Kathleen of being aware of this and of having encouraged him to try to obtain an invitation to Faversham. How much of this might be true she knew not, but she saw at once that this was what Sandy Beaumont suspected.

However, Kathleen looked quite unconscious of any secret understanding with Mr. Beauclerc, as she said: "I am sure I do not know how he may have heard of my

coming here. I don't think I can have told him, for he has been with his regiment at the Curragh for some time now."

"How has he managed to hold out so long?" asked Sandy. "I always liked the little fellow, but I should have thought he would have gone to the Jews long ago."

"Great things have happened to him as well as to you," replied Lord Faversham. "A scapegrace uncle of his broke the bank somewhere or other, and then came across Cosmo at some German baths he went to last autumn, and took a fancy to him. All the rest of his family had cut him, and he was only too delighted to find a nephew who was not ashamed to own him—Beauclerc always had a wonderfully cordial manner with all sorts of people—and yet was mixing in the best society; so when he died a few months after, happily for Cosmo before he had been able to make much of a hole in

his winnings, he left him all his money, which, unless it is a great deal more than I fancy at all likely, won't last long at the little fellow's rate of spending. However, it will last more than his time, I'm afraid, for I never saw a fellow look more out of condition than he does."

"There are not many men of whom more might have been made if only somebody had set about it in the right way," said Sandy, thoughtfully. "Now, as it is, I doubt whether Cosmo Beauclerc has done one useful action in all the years of his life."

"Are you not a little severe, Mr. Beaumont?" said Sybil, timidly.

"Do you think so?" he asked, looking her straight in the face in the manner that had been usual to the Sandy Beaumont of old, but which he seemed rather to have lost of late. "I don't think one can be too severe upon the circumstances or manage-

ment that have wasted so much good as there certainly once was in Beauclerc. As to being severe upon himself, I hope I know better than to be severe upon any man."

"Sandy, you have not become a Methodist as well as a Radical, I hope," exclaimed Kathleen.

"Do the two things go together?" he asked gloomily. Then there was a dead silence, which was only broken by his turning to the young Earl after a few minutes. "I suppose you never sing now, Faversham," he said; but Lord Faversham said he did, and after that he and Kathleen remained at the piano till it was time for the little party to disperse for the night.

CHAPTER III.

WHY WAS IT?

WHY Kathleen O'Grady had not yet married had long been a puzzle to the London world. It was a question that had been often asked, and many had been the explanations assigned. Some people asserted that she was too fast, and that though men liked well enough to flirt with that kind of girl, such was not the sort from which they selected their wives. But then, just when people were asserting this most loudly, they would receive undoubted proofs of some offer of marriage, that had just been made to Miss O'Grady, so that this explanation would not hold water. Again, other people said she

really flirted too much, and that though men offered to her—and of that there could be no doubt, for had she not accepted one or two of them?—yet before the time elapsed necessary for marriage-settlements and such like, the accepted lovers saw that charming though she was, they had made a mistake in fancying her desirable for a wife, and so jilted her. This never could be proved, for in each of the instances in which Miss O'Grady's engagements had not ended in marriage, there had been very ostensible pecuniary obstacles, which rendered any other explanation of the breaking off of the engagement quite unnecessary. Some people said that she was too fond of her liberty, and that, when it came to the point, she could not bear the idea of being in subjection to any man; others said that she had never cared for any of the men who had offered to her, and that though she had been persuaded

into accepting them, she had yet been too honest to carry on the deception further; and these people often hinted at an attachment to a cousin, of which they were sure they had heard something, but what they did not exactly know.

Kathleen had now been seen everywhere through pretty near the whole of four London seasons, not to mention her first season of all, which had been cut short by her father's illness. She had had a Roman winter, a Ryde autumn, two seasons at Pau, fortnights without number at Paris, besides innumerable trips to French and German watering places. Everywhere she had been *fêted;* everywhere she had been a belle, not seldom *the* belle; everywhere she had been seen, as a matter of course, surrounded by men, who did not even attempt to deny in words the very evident admiration they felt for her. She did not seem to dislike these

men; she seemed, indeed, to like some of them very much, and when the young Prince Paulovitch was imperiously recalled by his indignant family to go through his espousals with his previously bethrothed cousin, though Kathleen O'Grady still went everywhere as before, yet she did not dance for about a month, and made no secret of her sorrow. Again, when poor Fred Berkeley of the hussars finally sold out, and had to fly the country to escape his creditors, Kathleen fairly shut herself up for a week, and when at the end of this time she emerged from her retirement, it was with tearful eyes, which actually brimmed over, when any one spoke of handsome Fred. It was also well known among her admirers at the time that none but an hussar had a chance of a waltz with the beautiful Miss O'Grady during the rest of that season; for all other men her card was invariably full. But after a while

she seemed to forget Fred Berkeley, just as she had previously forgotten the Prince Paulovitch. And then nobody could understand why she did not marry Sir George Percival, whom she afterwards appeared just as fond of, as she had ever seemed of either of the other two men, and who had plenty of money, and was his own master to boot. She did not, and Sir George Percival disappeared from town for a time, and took to travelling. People said he also became very wild; but if so, he probably soon tired of it, for he appeared again after a year or two with a very quiet little wife. But her origin was doubtful, and her manners not quite like other people's; so the County looked coldly at her when Sir George took her down to the family mansion.

After Sir George, Kathleen had no very apparent lover for a little time, though there hovered around her a whole host of

would-be's, who evidently only lacked daring sufficient to enable any one of them to emerge from the crowd. About this time Lady Killowen and her daughter went to Malta for the winter, and when they started for England again a certain Lieutenant Poynter was found missing from his ship, certainly without leave, and very inexplicably. However, nothing ever came of it, except that Mr. Poynter had to leave the navy for this breach of discipline, and his friends called him rather a fool for his pains.

Thus the years passed, and some few of Kathleen's old admirers changed into friends; but the most part of them learnt to speak not over kindly of her, and young girls rather dreaded her, while their mothers avoided her as much as lay in their power; and her principal friends were young married women, and Kathleen herself never married. She herself told her intimate friends that her hap-

piness in life had been blasted by an Italian count, who had made love to her in her first youth, and then heartlessly forsaken her; since which time she had become heartless also, and case-hardened against the protestations of all men. But her intimate friends were of opinion that Kathleen O'Grady had a lively imagination, besides being of a romantic turn, and they did not trouble themselves to believe one word of this story, which she served up for their benefit. Perhaps it was rather difficult for them to believe it, for often after Kathleen had just finished telling this story, with tearful eyes, and a voice almost hard from excess of restrained feeling, she would trifle with a bracelet on her arm, in the clasp of which bracelet there was a photograph of a very young man, hardly more than a boy, with a small light moustache, and irregular but decidedly English features, and when

they asked whom this likeness was of, she would reply, with a sigh: "That is the only man I have ever really loved, the dearest boy, and the very best man I ever knew in all my life. I always wear this bracelet night and day; it never leaves me for a moment, and when I die, I mean to be buried with it."

After that it was a little difficult for her friends to believe in the story of the Italian count, and her subsequent heartlessness and indifference to mankind in general. But the young Countess of Faversham was not only one of Kathleen's intimate friends, she was her most intimate friend, and she knew that there was more truth than the world generally believed in this story of the Italian count; and that notwithstanding this photograph of the only man Kathleen had ever really loved, was the photograph of Sandy Beaumont; and it was, perhaps, a little of

this inconsistency in her friend's character that Sybil was thinking as she sat in her pretty circular morning room, arranging glorious crimson Jean des Batailles and sunny Cloth of Gold in a crystal vase, while Kathleen O'Grady sat beside her, leaning her head upon her hand, and every now and then toying with the roses. Lord Faversham had carried off Sandy Beaumont for a grand and careful survey of his farm; for Sandy had always been an authority about such matters, even when he had been only a young soldier, and now great things were expected of him since he had come home a wealthy Australian farmer, and grand improvements were expected to be suggested by his other hemisphere's experience. Of late the young Earl had taken very keenly to farming, which did not demand quite so great an outlay of physical strength as the other pursuits proper to the country gentleman. Thus, the

two men having betaken themselves to the farm, the ladies had been left to amuse themselves in the flower-garden, and now, having retired to Lady Faversham's boudoir, they were making the most of their trophies.

"You are wonderfully little changed, Kathleen," said Sybil, looking up at her friend, as having carefully selected the largest, reddest rose upon the table, she played with it for a second or two, and then carelessly snapped its head off.

"Yes, I wear well," replied the other, indifferently.

"I did not mean in looks, I meant in character."

"I am quite changed in character—changed utterly."

"You do not seem so."

"You have not seen much of me as yet, and you do not really know me, Sybil. I

know you think you do, but you don't, for you have no idea. Oh, if you only knew what I really was—how base, how wretched —you would never have asked me here. No; I know what you are going to say, that this is all nonsense, swagger perhaps, for some people do think it grand to make themselves out as bad as they can be, but this is not swagger. I am not only saying it for effect. I mean it really, and I only say it to you now because you are my only real friend, and it is a relief to be able to say it to some one."

"I daresay you may mean it, dearest, but all the same it is not true."

"Yes, it is true, and you were mad to have asked me here. You would never be my friend now if you had seen more of me lately, and you must know how much harm I did you when we were last together at Ryde. It was all my doing that you

ever got so ill, you had to go to Madeira."

"Well, then, it was all your doing that I ever married my husband, and indeed I think it was in a measure, and so far you did me great good."

"Oh, yes, you seem very happy now, and you get on wonderfully together, but you know you never loved Faversham."

"Kathleen," and Lady Faversham raised those large sorrowful eyes of hers, and opened them to their fullest extent. "He is my husband," she said.

"Yes, I am not forgetting that, and I know you love him well enough now, and all that, but you used to care for somebody else."

"That was a girlish fancy," cried Sybil, growing as crimson as the roses over which she stooped for a moment to hide her confusion; but she looked up again after an

instant, and, speaking rather quickly, said, "I am Faversham's wife now, and I do not love him well enough, and all that, as you say, but I love him, and so I did when I married him, or I never could have become his wife; and please do not talk about my ever having cared for any one else, Kathleen, for I don't think I ever did, really; and anyhow I am sure that a wife ought not to suffer herself *even* to think of ever having cared for any other man than her husband."

Then Lady Faversham grew as white as she had been red before, and having finished arranging her vase, carried it across the room with a decided step and erect carriage, such as was very unusual to her.

"I envy you for being able to have such ideas," said Kathleen with a sigh; "unfortunately most of the wives I know not only have cared, but do care, for somebody

else than their husbands, but I tell you I am not suited to you, Sybil; we have lived such different lives, and you seem to me always to have existed in a little separate world of your own, such as I but get a peep into every now and then through you. I only hope my peeps may not cost you too dear," she added, half under her breath.

"What do you mean, Kathleen?"

"Why, last time Sandy might have loved you, if it had not been for me, and how happy you might have made him, my poor dear Sandy! and now ——"

"And now Faversham is my husband," cried Lady Faversham, stamping with her little foot almost angrily; for to her it was maddening to be spoken to as if she ever could have become the wife of any man except that one man whose wife she was.

"Oh, Sybil, I did not mean *that*," exclaimed Kathleen in her most theatrical

style, rising up and laying her hand upon Lady Faversham's shoulder, so as to force her friend to look her in the face. "Do not fancy me so vain, so miserably vain, as to imagine I could ever win any man to care for me, who had once really known you, even if I did not know that Lord Faversham would be the last man in the world ——"

"He is my husband, Kathleen, and to me it is as impossible to think of my husband caring for any other woman as—I do not know what I think so impossible. Certainly, such an idea would never enter into my head, so I did not mean what you fancy, only—do not, please, think I am angry—but it certainly seems to me that you have learnt a strange way of talking."

"Does it sound strange to you? But that is because you live so out of the world. Oh, Sybil, I often think if I were a man I would never care even to speak to a girl

who had been out in town. London men are detestable, and London girls are just like them."

"But that must be nonsense, Kathleen; I have never had a London season myself, for Faversham is not strong enough, and I should not care about it; but there is his mother, she has always gone up to town for the season, and now she lives there altogether, and she is as ——"

"As pure and simple minded as possible, I grant you. But then you Countesses have your advantages, and she was born into the best set, and has never mixed in any other; and, on the other hand, if she had not been born into it, she would never have got into it by herself, nor into any fashionable set whatsoever, and half the girls about town are making their own way in society, and are as different as possible from your mother-in-law, though some of them work

their way up in the end, and some of them sink, just as mother and I have sunk."

"And then you expect such a man as Mr. Beaumont to care for you? Oh, Kathleen, if I thought of myself half as badly as you profess to think, I should pray that no honest man might ever care for me."

"There is no danger of that," laughed Kathleen. "No honest man ever will care for me, or ever has, though some of them may have fancied they did. And least of all do I expect that Sandy will ever care for me, though I would die to win one single word of kindness from him—yes, I would die for it, Sybil," and the large tears rolled down Kathleen's cheeks, and she buried her face in her hands, and swayed herself backwards and forwards in an agony of grief.

"Oh, Kathleen, my own dearest, forgive me, I did not mean to be so cruel. He must

care for you again; oh, I know he will. Forgive me, forgive me, Kathleen!"

Kathleen held out one of her hands, and wrung Sybil's convulsively, but she still kept her face averted, as she said, "Forgive you, dearest! what have I to forgive?"

As she spoke she heard footsteps in the passage, and the next moment there was a knock heard at the door, and Sandy Beaumont's voice, saying, "May I come in?"

"Yes, pray, come in," said Sybil, in great confusion; but Kathleen, though still with the tears in her large beautiful eyes, looked round quite composedly. "Well, which has been proved to have most experience—you or Lord Faversham?"

"I did not know it had been a competitive examination," said Sandy, quietly; "but if it was, certainly I am not qualified to decide."

Then he began admiring Lady Faversham's roses, and after that the two entered into a discussion as to the respective flora of Great Britain and New Holland, from which they went off rather at a tangent to discuss the system of government as carried on at Sydney, till at last, in the considering who had a right to votes and who had not, there came some mention of infants, and thereupon Lady Faversham at once recollected that Mr. Beaumont had not yet seen her children.

"I should like to show them to you," she exclaimed, "but perhaps, you don't like children."

"On the contrary, I am very fond of them, but is that one of them at the door now? No, I am afraid it is Rover, who has learned bad manners in the colonies, and forgotten that ladies' boudoirs are holy ground."

"Oh no, they are not. At least, do let him in, I should so like to see him again—such a beautiful dog as he is," she said, caressingly, as Sandy opened the door, and the large curly Newfoundland walked slowly in; but he passed by Lady Faversham without paying her any attention, and going straight up to Kathleen, wagged his tail, and laid his head upon her lap as if to claim some notice from her. Then Kathleen flung her arms round his neck, and sinking upon the ground beside him, buried her glowing face among Rover's black curling hair, kissing the dog again and again, and as she did so, Lady Faversham also knelt down and kissed the dog's glossy head and played lovingly with its curls.

Perhaps Sandy Beaumont wondered a little as he stood by looking on at this little demonstration of feeling, for plain and little gifted by nature though he was, he yet knew

well enough that this graceful young Countess and this great London beauty would never have lavished so much kindness on Rover simply for his own sake, beautiful old Newfoundland though he was.

But Sybil rose up after a minute or two, and went to fetch her children, leaving Kathleen still sitting upon the floor, with both arm's clasped round the dog's neck. Then, when the two were thus left alone together, Kathleen raised her face from its refuge among Rover's curls, and looked at her cousin with eyes again grown tearful.

"Will you never forgive me, Sandy?" she said.

"What have I got to forgive?" asked Sandy, indifferently; and as he spoke, he sat down and took up a book, as if thereby to testify how completely indifferent he was as to her answer to the question he had just asked.

But Kathleen was anything but indifferent. "Oh, Sandy, you know well enough. But for me you would never have left the army, you would never have gone to Australia."

"Well, I suppose that was the wisest step I ever took," he replied, still without looking at her. "Had I remained in England I should probably have continued to be a very poor man up to the present time."

On this, a rich colour mantled over Kathleen's cheeks, and she spoke angrily: "How can you talk in that way, Sandy? As if you cared about riches, when you know well enough they are only a burden to you, and you would just as soon that the whole of Australia was sunk in the sea to-morrow. You know you do not care about being rich, only you do not like to say that you have not forgiven me, and you are too honest to tell a story."

"As far as I had anything to forgive, I forgave you long ago," said Sandy; and then Lady Faversham entered with her children—little Lord Castlemere, who was like his father, with blue eyes and golden hair, only with pale cheeks that did not promise well for the health of his future years; and Lady Milicent, or Milly, as she was more often called, who was plump and rosy and fair haired, but with her mother's dark serious eyes. The children took to Sandy at once, and climbed upon his knee, and stroked his beard, as if they had known him all their lives, but after a few minutes Sybil took them away again, for Lady Faversham had strict notions about education, and young though her children were, there was already a nursery governess, who was even now waiting for them.

Kathleen did not speak whilst the children were in the room, nor take any other notice

of them, but as soon as they were led away by their mother, she turned again to Sandy, "If you have forgiven me, cannot you treat me as you used to do, Sandy?"

"I have forgiven you Kathleen; if I had anything to forgive," said Sandy, speaking very slowly, and walking to the window, and looking out as he spoke. Then he turned away from the window, and looking at his beautiful cousin as she sat leaning back in a low chair, softly caressing Rover's shaggy head, he spoke again, still very slowly: "But I have not forgotten anything, Kathleen, not anything."

Then Lady Faversham came back once more, and Kathleen rose up at once, and swiftly and silently left the room.

"Poor dear Kathleen," said Lady Faversham, looking lovingly after her. "I wish she were happier."

"A very useless wish, I am afraid."

"Why? Do you think it is impossible? But hers is so noble a character, oh, I am sure, she was meant by nature to be very good and very happy!"

"Think what her bringing up has been."

"You seem to think a great deal of education, Mr. Beaumont; I wonder what your own was!"

"That of being born into the world plain and penniless," said Sandy, bitterly. "I saw from the first that I must do something that deserved love to make any one care for me, and I suppose few men have wished more for love than I have."

"I should not have thought you would have cared for anything of the kind, but you have not been unsuccessful, that I am sure of, though perhaps you think so."

"No, I don't; at least not altogether," said he, more softly, and patting Rover as he spoke. "I have a few friends, whom I could

count upon—who would commit murder for me, if I wished it, I believe."

"And you would do as much for them, I suppose. Yes, you are a good friend, but oh! Mr. Beaumont, are you not a cruel enemy?"

"To whom?" he asked in cold clear tones, raising his head, and looking at her with an expression of self-contained power, that might have made a stronger character than Lady Faversham tremble.

She did tremble a little inwardly, but she had broached the subject now, and she was determined to go through with it. "To Kathleen," she said; "it was her doing that you went to Australia, I suppose, though how I have never understood, but whatever it was that made you go to Australia makes you still angry with your cousin, and her enemy."

"Is it possible you do not know why I

went to Australia? I thought every one in Ryde must have understood that, and you especially, who were so much with her. There was another reason as well, which of course I knew no one could guess; but did Kathleen never tell you? nor Faversham?"

"Had my husband anything to do with it?" asked Sybil, surprised. "But he had left Ryde long before, surely you are forgetting?"

"Not forgetting," replied Sandy, a cloud coming over his face, "only mixing up things that have no connection. The real reason I went to Australia was because my cousin engaged herself to Mr. Simpson; after that——"

"But she never was engaged to him, she never was, she told me so herself."

"When did she tell you so!" asked Sandy, glancing up quickly and authoritatively.

"When I went to tell her of his death," replied Sybil, shuddering at the recollection of the tragedy that took place during her one season at Ryde, when Mr. Simpson, a man of enormous wealth, whom many people thought the beautiful Miss O'Grady was beginning to look upon with favourable eyes, took his yacht over to Cherbourg, and on the way back, landing on the south side of the Isle of Wight, either fell, or was pushed off the edge of a cliff by a woman who was walking with him, and who was supposed to have her own reasons for desiring his death. "I was the first person to tell her of it, and she told me then she was not engaged to him; only his death seemed even more dreadful to her than it would to others, because she had been seeing so much of him till just the last."

"Seeing so much of him! Yes, as his future wife! She may have told you anything, but she was engaged to him. I know it."

"I cannot believe she would have told me a downright story," pleaded Lady Faversham, now with the tears in her eyes. "Kathleen has a wonderful imagination, and she—— yes, certainly she exaggerates sometimes; but a downright story, and at such a time."

"The girl who could promise to become Mr. Simpson's wife, would not be likely to shrink much from telling a story. At least, not in my opinion; but very likely you know women better," and Sandy rose to go, as if weary of the subject.

But Lady Faversham would not let him off so easily. "You are bitter, Mr. Beaumont; but if Kathleen is your cousin, she is my friend, and I will not have her character taken away in this way. I will ask her myself."

"Indeed, I must beg you will not, Lady Faversham. I would not have my cousin

think that we had been discussing the matter. It is all long ago; let us forget it now. What is the use of raking up things that were painful once, and have only ceased to be so because they all happened so long ago—so very long ago!" And Sandy passed his hand quickly across his forehead, as it brushing away old recollections that were coming back and troubling him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Beaumont, I am afraid I did not think of the pain I might be giving you."

"Indeed, you have been giving me no pain. As I said before, it is all so long ago; and it is only like you to defend the absent, you always were a good friend. Recollect, though, you promised to be my friend once," and Sandy Beaumont smiled as he had smiled long years before, when he had lightly asked Sybil Mordaunt to be his friend, and she in all seriousness had promised she would.

Lady Faversham now hastened to reply, "It is because I am so very much your friend that I have spoken as I have."

"Yes, I know it," said Sandy Beaumont, speaking in the soft mellow tones that were almost his only adventitious charm. "But it is useless to try to make me see my cousin with your eyes. You see, we played together as boy and girl, and I know her so very well. I can only see her with my own eyes."

Then he left the room, and Lady Faversham almost cried to think she had been so unsuccessful. Since she had not carried her point, she wished very much that she had not began the subject. Indeed, it seemed to her now that she had made a great mistake in so doing. Then from the open window she saw Kathleen wandering about alone among the flower-beds, and she hastened down to join her.

There was a great deal of flower-garden

about Faversham Cottage; there were bright coloured beds set in turf all about the house, except just by the hall-door, where the drive monopolised all the available space. On one side of the house this region of turf and flowers extended for some little distance, bordered by a narrow winding walk, half buried in sweet flowering shrubs, and from the house again there wound a rhododendron bordered path down to the bottom of the little valley, into which the ground sloped on the west side of the house, sloping less abruptly there than it did on the east side, where was the steep approach to the cottage from the outside world. Through the little valley meandered a clear trout stream, across which were thrown pretty flower canopied bridges, and on the other side of the stream were yet choicer flowers, again set in turf, but here each fancifully shaped border was girt round with a wide edging of pale blue

forget-me-nots, that never flowered so abundantly, or turned such large starlike eyes up to heaven as in this innermost recess, this holy of holies of the garden of Faversham Cottage. Again, beyond this garden there were woods climbing up the hills behind, for all the ground about was hilly, and in these woods there was many a beautiful foreign exotic of the less rare kind, that did not seem to fare the worse for transportation, nor disdained to mix a pale blue feathery foliage with the bright green of our English larches and birch-trees. There, too, blossomed rhododendrons in prodigal abundance, gorgeous at this season of the year, with every tint of red, from the most visionary *parfaite amour* tint to rich eye-satisfying crimson. But it was not in these woods, nor among the forget-me-nots by the stream, that Lady Faversham found Miss O'Grady.

Kathleen had no savagery left in her nature, she had no longing to bury herself in the solitude of the woods, nor to rush to the isolation of the mountain peaks either in great joy or in great sorrow. Misery in a boudoir was her ideal misery, and since being now in a stranger's house, she had no boudoir of her own, in which to revel in the doubtful charms of melancholy, she had chosen a flowery harbour as the next most appropriate refuge. Thus Sybil found her in the winding walk, bounding the rich green turf and brightly-coloured flowers on the south side of the house, neither out of sight nor hearing of her fellow-men.

On seeing Lady Faversham, Kathleen held out her hand, and drew her friend's arm within her own. "Dearest Sybil, you have been fighting my battles, I know. How good you are to me."

"Indeed, I am not good at all, and you

should not fancy that there is any need to fight your battles."

"No one would think so but you, you dear old thing. Any one else would see that Sandy is mortally offended with me; and I deserve it, I know."

"Kathleen, I wish you would not say such things. You will end by making even me think badly of you, if you will persist in speaking so badly of yourself."

"It is the truth, Sybil. There is no good in me—none; how should there be? No one has ever spoken to me, as if there were such a thing as goodness in the world except you."

"Not Mr. Beaumont?" said Sybil, very low.

She was not shy of talking to Sandy himself, but she was very shy of speaking of him to Kathleen, who never for a moment forgot that Sybil had once been in love with

him, and never spared her. She did not spare her now.

"No, not even Sandy Beaumont, whom I see you still think so perfect. But if you will remember, Sybil, Sandy never was much given to church going, or any of the other things, of which you used to think so much."

"I remember I used to be sorry he did not think more about religion," said Lady Faversham, after a pause, and half unwillingly; "but I think he must be changed now. I hope he is."

"I dare say he may be," said Kathleen, indifferently, "but that does not change the past. I say I have never had a friend, but you, who cared whether I did right or wrong; and I don't care myself. Why should I? Nobody else does."

"Oh, yes, Kathleen——"

"Oh, I know what you are going to say,

but I can't talk religion now. It is too late for that kind of thing with me, Sybil—too late. I have only lived in the present for so long, I cannot change now. Did Sandy seem very angry with me, Sybil?" and as she spoke Kathleen pushed the bracelet containing his portrait higher up her arm, and began playing with the clasp, as was a trick of hers.

"No, he did not seem angry," began Lady Faversham, slowly.

"No, of course not," interrupted Kathleen again. "I am not worth that now. But he was angry once," she added, half to herself.

Then the luncheon-bell rang, and Lord Faversham appeared round the corner of the house, still in close conference with his bailiff; but he dismissed the bailiff on seeing the two ladies, and joined his wife and Kathleen.

CHAPTER IV.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

Though Cosmo Beauclerc had, in the original instance, allowed himself every liberty as to trains, and in his telegram had only said "about feeding time," without specifying whether he meant luncheon or dinner, he arrived at last in very good time for the latter meal, having travelled by the very train by which Lord Faversham had expected him. However, it being thus doubtful when he would arrive, the latter had not thought it necessary to go to meet him; so that when Cosmo Beauclerc drove up to the door of the Cottage in a very rickety cab, on which his multifarious packages seemed to

have rather an alarming effect, he was at once conducted round the house, and found the little party assembled sitting about the bow-window of the further drawing-room, discussing afternoon tea, spread out upon the window-seat.

"Hollo! Cosmo, here you are," exclaimed the two men simultaneously, for no man ever called young Beauclerc by anything but his Christian name; and then there was a warm shake of the hands from Lord Faversham and a slightly less warm grasp from Sandy Beaumont, who had not met Cosmo for years, and had not even then known much of him. Then Lady Faversham succeeded in disengaging herself from her tea equipage sufficiently to welcome her guest; and Kathleen O'Grady lazily extended her left hand, the right being at that moment occupied by a tea-cup. But though she held out her hand very lazily, she had sufficient energy left to

give him a bright, particular smile of welcome, and to say to him, "So you *have* come!" in tones too low to reach any one else, but not too low for Cosmo himself to hear; and though it was evidently her welcome about which he had most cared, he seemed perfectly satisfied now, and quickly turned away without caring to make his interest in her unnecessarily conspicuous to the rest of the little group.

"You look better than when I saw you last, old man; some fresh country air and doing nothing will soon set you up," said Lord Faversham, cheerily.

"Yes, doing nothing will be such a wonderful change for me. I don't think I've seen my uniform, except for one fortnight, during the last two years; and half this last time I've been so sick, I've been shut up in barracks. Anything is better than that awful parade, so this child thinks. Oh, I hate the

whole thing; never got beyond the goose step myself."

"You never were in the way of being much of a soldier, I remember," said Sandy, with a slight tinge of humour, as he surveyed the little man, who in his green velveteen shooting suit, scarlet stockings, and fashionably gouty walking-stick, looked somewhat like a living caricature of the fashions; "but you must have been very lucky to get so much leave."

"Lucky! that is nothing to what this child has been; but he has been awfully ill too, you know, Lady Faversham. 'Pon honour, I have; last year, at Wiesbaden, they never thought I'd get through it. Oh, and the agonies I suffered!"

"Mr. Beauclerc as usual, Mr. Beauclerc's first subject," remarked Kathleen, as she handed him her cup to put down.

"No, but really—you will have some more tea, won't you? No! some cake?

Well, you know it is as well to show somebody takes an interest in you."

"I see it is in reality Mr. Beauclerc's modesty which makes him start with thinking that nobody will find him interesting unless he exerts himself——"

"No, you are too hard really, Miss O'Grady. 'Pon honour, too bad, really. What have you been doing, Beaumont, since we last met? Your cousin is so hard upon me, I am driven to take refuge with you. Coming into no end of coin, have not you been?"

"Pretty well," said Sandy, quietly.

"Pretty well! that is the way you millionaires always talk. Pretty well! I know what pretty well means. When a fellow tells me he is come in for no end, gives you to understand it is about a plum, and all that humbug, I always guess next Newmarket will about see him cleaned out; but pretty

well! I say what odds will you give me on Red Ribbon?"

"I've given up racing."

"Given up racing! Oh, I like that. You have not got a Derby in the colonies, have you? By the way, who do you think I came across at one of those German baths last year, Faversham? An old Ryde friend! Guess everybody."

"Well, I am sure I don't know who it could be. I had not many friends at Ryde, hardly recollect any one there," said Lord Faversham. Upon which Cosmo Beauclerc rattled on again.

"Oh yes, you do; you know the man I mean. Not that he was a friend of yours, I don't say; indeed, I don't think he was any one's friend particularly; but you know who I mean, that foreign fellow, Manfredi, who ran off with what's-his-name's wife, you recollect the fellow in the —th."

"Count Manfredi!" exclaimed Lady Faversham. "I always thought he must be dead long ago."

"Dead! not a bit of it. Looking just the same, not a day older, quite in luck too, which this child thought yet more wonderful."

"He is not in society any longer, I suppose?" asked Lord Faversham.

"Rather! Why, he was quite the rage, and always going about with that Russian Princess. I never can recollect names, but the woman with the wonderful diamonds; you must know who I mean. Oh, I assure you, this child felt quite flattered by his recognition. A capital fellow too, gave me a dinner at his hotel, one of the most *récherché* things you ever saw."

"What has become of that unhappy woman?" asked Lord Faversham again. "I was always sorry for her; if ever woman put her foot in it, she did."

"Yes, I should think so," said Cosmo, growing grave for a moment, then chattering on in his usual fashion. "I heard at the time, but I forget now, she either cut her throat, or took poison, anyhow she was found dead one morning. Some people say Manfredi did it for her, but that kind of thing is always hushed up on the continent; impossible to get at the truth of anything there, you know. Anyhow, she always looked just the sort of woman to kill herself, and he was sure to give her plenty of cause. By the way, Miss O'Grady, that reminds me, though why I don't know, I have been hearing no end of good of your cousin Lord Killowen lately."

"Have you really? Oh, do tell me what you have heard."

"Why, that he is a model landlord, a most active man on Committees in the House, a promoter of half a dozen societies

for turning bad people into good, and a whole lot more. Indeed, by all accounts, he seems to be a perfect paragon."

"I believe he is doing a great deal of good on the estate, I am so glad for all the dear old people's sake. One cannot lose all interest in them, though one has ceased to live among them," and the ready tears came into the beauty's large blue eyes.

"No, I should think not," said Cosmo, while Lord Faversham began:

"Though I don't agree with his politics at all, I can't deny that he is doing a great deal of good in Ireland, and he is immensely respected in all the country round. I only wish he was not quite so far off; one can hardly get over to Killowen and back in the day. He is in town now, I believe, though."

"Yes," said Sandy, "I could not resist taking a peep at the dear old castle on the way down here the other day, and I heard

then he was in town. The place looked very well cared for."

"Did you go to Killowen itself, Sandy?" asked Kathleen."

"Yes, to Killowen itself, of course. I have spent too many happy days there in the old time not to care to go a little out of my way to see it again."

"So you are for the place still," she murmured, but so low that Sandy hardly heard her, and the conversation about Lord Killowen continued without interruption, every one agreeing in pronouncing him a most energetic, well principled, and, altogether praiseworthy young nobleman. Only Kathleen's voice was not heard in his praise; but then as she was his cousin, this seemed but natural to the others, who felt also as if they were in a manner complimenting her in speaking thus highly of her cousin, the present head of her family.

Again, the next morning, Lady Faversham and Kathleen found themselves alone together in the former's boudoir. Lord Faversham and Sandy Beaumont had gone off for a ride to a distant part of the estate, and Cosmo Beauclerc, having had his breakfast taken up to his own room, had not yet made his appearance, thus Kathleen and Sybil were left alone again; and, this morning, Kathleen began to descant upon the wickedness of the world in general, instead of upon her own in particular, generally her favourite topic.

"It is money that carries the day everywhere," she said, "and as to truth and honesty, they have some meaning in fiction, perhaps, but in real life, they are mere words and nothing more, and I look forward to the day when they will not even be found in the dictionary."

"I am glad I have not your views of life,

but what great falsehood have you heard of lately?"

"Oh, none in particular. I was only thinking over all my friends."

"Who are your friends now? I should like so much to know what they are like."

"Oh, Mrs. De Veux I have been seeing most of lately. She has been very kind to me."

"Mrs. De Veux," said Lady Faversham, thoughtfully. "Did I not hear her rather talked about with Major O'Connor?"

"She ran away to him once," said Kathleen, readily. "Don't say I told you, because she is my most particular friend at present, and it has been as much hushed up as possible; but, poor dear, I am afraid it is of no use. Then there's Effie Vivyer, who married Lord Mendleton last year. I have not seen much of her since her marriage, but we were great friends before.

Poor child, I shall never forget how she hung round my neck the evening before her marriage. 'Oh, pray for me that I may not see much of *him*, or I can never stand it. I never can.' He, I need not tel you, was a younger son without a farthing; and so, of course, she married poor Mendleton, and I don't think the other was worth any one's breaking their heart about, for he married a soap-boiler's daughter only a month or two afterwards; but she thought so, poor child, and she only just escaped a brain fever when she heard of his marriage. Then there's Lady Joyce, Sir Hugh's wife, now I think she is an honest woman, if ever there was one, but she has found out now why Sir Hugh married her, and that he was engaged to his cousin the whole time, and I am afraid she will go down hill faster than any of them. She has taken to drinking already."

"Oh, Kathleen, don't. Let us talk of something else."

"Yes," said Kathleen, bitterly, "you see my friends are such as you will not even talk about. I told you what sort of set I was in."

"But why, Kathleen, why do you choose such friends? You ought not to associate with such people, Mrs. De Veux particularly; and as to a woman who drinks!" And Lady Faversham paused in disgust at the notion.

"Those are the sort of people I have been thrown with for the last five years of my life, and out of them I have chosen for friends the ones I think best. But, depend upon it, the people you know are just as bad, if you only knew all about them. Now, if you were introduced to Mrs. De Veux, I have very little doubt you would think her a charming person. She would talk to you about her schools and her poor people, and

she does an immensity of good amongst them, I believe, always trotting about her village with a great basket on her arm, and teaching in the school on Sunday. As to Effie Mendleton, she is very silly, I daresay, but such an affectionate little thing; and Lady Joyce you might call too loud, but I think you, Sybil, would have discernment enough to see how genuine and reliable she is. You must recollect I have told you all the shadows in my friends' lives, which you would have taken years to discover for yourself. Depend upon it, other people all have much the same shadows, if you only knew them."

"I have not myself," said Lady Faversham.

"Perhaps they are to come, but we'll hope not, dearest," said Kathleen, taking her hand and pressing it affectionately; but while she did so Kathleen thought to her-

self, "Yes, even Sybil is a hypocrite: she loved Sandy, not Faversham; but because Faversham is an Earl, she has married him, and now she is so bent on persuading the rest of the world that it was for love, that I believe she has succeeded in persuading herself."

In these thoughts Miss O'Grady wronged her friend. Lady Faversham had loved Sandy Beaumont long ago; but, poor though he was then, she would never for a moment have hesitated to face the world by his side had he cared for her. Only Sandy had not cared for her; he had cared for his cousin instead, and she had not been ready to believe in love in a cottage, much less in love in a lodging, the far drearier alternative of modern days. So Sandy had gone away to Australia, and Sybil, knowing its utter hopelessness, had with a great effort crushed back the love in her heart, though not the craving for love. Afterwards meeting Lord Faver-

sham, who was also craving for love, and was, moreover, ready to give love in return, she had quickly learnt to care for him, not as she had once cared for Sandy Beaumont—few women can love twice like that, and those few are hardly to be deemed blessed in the power—but very well, very really. Had Sybil not been able to marry Lord Faversham then, had he been taken away from her by death, or otherwise, it would probably have broken her heart; she would scarcely have survived that second shock, for hers was a nature that greatly needed love, and her father and her mother had been taken from her, and she had no one left to love her in the world. But no obstacle had arisen, no cruel Fate had stepped in between them, and warned them to stand aloof from one another for all time: so she had married Lord Faversham, and loved him since her marriage far more than before; for, though she indig-

nantly disclaimed the idea now, she had hardly *quite* learnt to love him before marrying him. But Lord Faversham being an Earl and rich, had had nothing to do with his wife's acceptance of him, and in thinking this Miss O'Grady wronged her friend.

However, Kathleen did not pause long over so doing. She had never believed that Lady Faversham had married her husband for love, and she was accustomed to the idea, and thought no worse of her for it. So she passed it over lightly now, and, drawing a letter from her pocket, said, "See what came for me by the post this morning. Read it, and tell me what you think of it."

Then Lady Faversham took the letter, and read :

"My Dear Kathleen,

"I have of course for a long time been aware how involved your father, my late

uncle's affairs were at his death, but your frankness on the occasion of our last meeting enables me now to allude to it, and this frankness of yours encourages me also to ask you, as I have for some time been intending, to allow me to remove you from the vexatious circumstances in which you have thus necessarily found yourself, and to restore you to your proper position. I do not talk to you of love, for after such a slight acquaintance as that which exists between us, it would hardly be natural for you to feel anything of the kind for me; but we have both of us lived enough in the world to know how very little of that ingredient enters into most of the marriages that go on around us. I have for some time been intending to marry, and after long and careful deliberation have quite made up my mind that you are the woman I wish most to have for my wife. On the other hand, I need hardly point out to you the

advantages you would gain by such a marriage; but allow me to say that you might rely upon my making every effort for your happiness, and that, though I may not appear a very enthusiastic lover, I have yet no scruple on that account in promising that you would find me a very faithful and considerate husband. Pray do not be in any hurry to return me an answer. I should wish you to weigh my proposal well before deciding, and am at present too much occupied with Committee work to have much leisure in which to be disturbed, as to my ultimate success; but by the middle of August I expect to be at home for a little, and shall hope to hear from you.

"Trusting that your answer may be in the affirmative,

"Believe me to be,

"Ever your affectionate Cousin,

"KILLOWEN."

"Lord Killowen! could he write such a letter as that?" exclaimed Lady Faversham, in disgust.

"It is not quite the kind of letter you would expect from such a very high principled young man?" asked Kathleen.

"I had no idea—I never thought he was like this."

"Yes; but remember what you said of him yourself only yesterday, Sybil, and remember you would never have known of this letter but for me."

"Yes; but what does he mean by 'involved,' and 'vexatious circumstances'? Surely you are not in debt, Kathleen?"

Kathleen laughed. "My dear Sybil, how should I be otherwise? But you rich people never consider; you do not know what it is to be poor."

"Oh, Kathleen, when you know how poor I was before I married, and I did mind

it so. I often think I never deserved to be rich, I hated being poor so much."

"Yes; I grant you, you were poor then. Poorer, in point of fact, than I have ever been, a great deal; but you kept your wants within your means. You did without what you could not pay for, and I have never even tried to do that; so I say again that you have never known what it is to be poor."

"But poor or not poor, you must not be driven into marrying this man—this cold mercenary man, who has not the grace even to feign a little feeling."

"You must not run Killowen down in that way. I believe he has a great deal of feeling, only it is perfectly under control, of course, and he would think himself terribly weak to be influenced by it one way or another. But I really believe he cares for me very much, and you see he does not ex-

pect an answer for a month, so there is no hurry about it."

"But a month passes so quickly, and you *must* not be hurried into a marriage like this; for if you wait a little, it must all come right. I know what is making you so bitter against the world just now; but only wait a little patiently, and you will see it will come right. He does care for you, really, I'm sure, though he is so determined not to show it."

"I suppose it is a little because I love Sandy so much, that I *talk* so bitterly. I am generally wiser than to do that; but it makes no difference in things really, and Sandy will never care for me again. He had rather be torn asunder with red-hot pincers, than care for me now. Oh, the misery of it, Sybil! I had his love once, and I despised it then, or fancied I did. I don't believe I did really. I always knew it was so sterling; but I seemed to despise it then, and now I can

never have it again." And Kathleen got up and leaned out of the window, as if to calm her agitated feelings. "There is poor little Beauclerc wandering about all alone," she said, in a quieter tone, as she looked out. "Shall we go down and join him?"

"I wish you would, dearest, he will be so dull all alone; but I really must go down to the village to see a poor woman there. I ought to have gone before, only I have stayed on talking somehow, and now there is only just time to go there before luncheon. I don't think either you or Mr. Beauclerc would care for the walk, or I would ask you to go with me; but though it is very pretty across the fields, it would be rather further than you would care for, I fancy; so do go and amuse Mr. Beauclerc for me."

"One comfort is, he is very easily amused. I shall take him to the kitchen-garden, and make him stuff me with fruit. People say

there is no pleasure in strawberries, unless one gathers them for oneself; but I know I had always rather have some one to stoop for me."

So Kathleen gathered up her hat and gloves, and went out to join Cosmo Beauclerc in the pleasant sunshiny morning, and the two strolled off together to the kitchen-garden.

In the afternoon they played croquet. The next day there was to be a large pic-nic, which they were all to join; so for this afternoon they unanimously voted it too hot for any but the most gentle exercise, and sauntered about among the flower-beds, pretending to play with the croquet balls. Kathleen and Lord Faversham sided together against Lady Faversham and Mr. Beauclerc, who made the weakest of adversaries, and allowed the two others to walk over the ground with scarcely any resistance. Sandy declared he

had forgotten croquet in Australia, and that he had letters to write, which must go out by that evening's post, and then he went away as if to write them; but in a moment or two he returned, and Kathleen, looking up from a ball she was roquetting, saw him standing beside her with her parasol. "I saw you were wanting it," he said.

"Oh, thank you, Sandy," she exclaimed, and the burning colour mounted to her brow. It seemed so natural, so exactly like old times, to be waited on by him in this way, and yet there was something strange about it now. She had had many men in love with her, since he had been away; but none who had waited upon her every whim, and forestalled all her little wishes, as Sandy had always done, ever since he had been only a schoolboy.

But Sandy, though he brought her her parasol, as he had been used to do, did not

even look at her, as he now gave it to her, nor did he wait to hold it over her as she played. No; that he left for Cosmo Beauclerc to do, while he himself went into the house to write his letters.

Kathleen was very well attended upon notwithstanding. Cosmo Beauclerc, though generally known among his lady friends as the most volatile of young men, was really in love with the beauty now; and even when he was not in love, he was never so much taken up with his ceaseless chatter about "the coin this child had dropped," and the tortures he had suffered, as not to pay all requisite *petits soins* to any lady in whose presence he happened to find himself. Indeed, being in love made him, if anything, a little less attentive; for he had talked too much about "spooning" in the course of his butterfly little life, to care to be seen "spooning" himself, when it was with a girl he really

cared for. And he really cared for Kathleen O'Grady now; he would have cared for her years before, when he had first made her acquaintance, had he thought that there was any chance for him then. But poor as he was at that time, he knew that it would be ridiculous for him to expect more than a passing smile from the glorious young beauty.

However, since first seeing her, he had always thought of her as the most beautiful girl, with the highest spirit of any of those varying beauties, who had flitted across his path in life; and having met her in town at the beginning of the season, shortly after he had come into his fortune, Cosmo had quickly begun to make furious love to the Irish beauty. That time, however, was past now, Miss O'Grady knew well enough that he was a suitor for her hand, and there was no need for furious love any longer. They had entered into a correspondence on his being

ordered to join his regiment, and when Kathleen accepted her friend's invitation to Faversham, she had given Cosmo to understand that if he were able to procure another invitation for himself, she was quite willing to consider his merits under the advantages of a closer and more intimate acquaintance. So Cosmo Beauclerc had come down, to try his luck as it were; but this being the case, he did not want to make his attempt unnecessarily conspicuous, and rarely spoke to the beauty, unless when he could get her alone, as this morning in the garden. Yet, though he did not pay a very open court to her, Kathleen knew with what eyes he regarded her, and she felt much more herself with Cosmo Beauclerc ready to carry her parasol for her, or pay her any other such common little attentions, than she had yet felt since her arrival at Faversham; for it had been very strange to her to be without an acknow-

ledged admirer—some man to whom her smile was sweeter than any other woman's, and who, as she knew, in her presence looked upon all other people as bores of variously mitigated forms, and only longed for them all to go away, and himself to be left alone with her. Happily, though Kathleen herself knew this was the case with Cosmo Beauclerc, Lord and Lady Faversham were quite unconscious with what feelings their new guest regarded them, and were even a little surprised that he did not appear more taken with the beautiful and fascinating Kathleen.

CHAPTER V.

NO HOPE FOR KATHLEEN.

THERE were some rocks near Faversham, of no very gigantic size, nor in any way particularly interesting to the geologist, but which, nevertheless, may be said to figure almost annually upon the walls of the Academy, and are always safe to be found in either Exhibition of Water Colours. It was at these rocks that the pic-nic was to take place, in which the little party from Faversham Cottage were expected to join, and hardly anywhere could a place have been found better adapted for the purpose. There was a grassy plot near the summit of the rocks, commanding a beautiful view over the sur-

rounding country, and in great measure shaded by an ancient weird-like ash-tree, which flung green trailing tresses round its misshapen trunk, in a manner to invite all comers to sit down under their shelter, and contemplate the landscape. That was the spot for the luncheon, of course. Then in the rocks below there were caves, about which romantic stories were told, affording a never-ending fund of conversation; and all the side at the foot of the rocks, and round about the rocks was well wooded, with small, but none the less pretty trees, of rather a bushy growth, through which curiously winding paths were cut for such as preferred a comfortable footing, and through which again other paths could easily be forced by the more venturesome of the party, who were of an exploring turn.

It had been a subject of interest with Lady Faversham to see whom Sandy Beau-

mont would choose for his companion at this pic-nic. He was so recently home from Australia, had been so entirely out of the way of society for years, that she could not help fearing he might at a first glance be taken an unresisting captive by one of the smiling coaxing Irish beauties, and that then, indeed, all her long cherished schemes for uniting him and Kathleen would be dissipated for ever. But if she had entertained uneasy doubts about this matter, her doubts were very soon set at rest. Sandy showed no inclination to number himself among the admirers of the two tall, well-rounded, blooming Miss Brady's, when they set off for a walk through the woods, nor was he lured on by that little coquette, Sophy Murphy, to adventure his life for her sake in the innermost recesses of one of the darkest caves, to which popular tradition was wont to assert there was no end. He waited unmoved, while he

saw the party dispersing, and then he turned to a small fair-haired girl in deep mourning, "Are you not going to join the others in their walk, Miss Murphy?" he said.

Norah Murphy was the naughty Sophy's orphan cousin, and Lady Faversham saw at once that it was only a sort of compassion for the girl, who seemed to be a stranger, and left out by the others in their various amusements, that made Sandy help her so carefully through the winding caves, and then talk to her by preference, as they wandered through the woods.

Norah Murphy was little in all her other proportions, as well as in her height; she had little hands and feet, and a little well-shaped nose, little teeth too, of a pearly whiteness, but so tiny that they barely showed, even when she laughed, which she did very rarely; and a little voice that was apt to be rather plaintive in its tones. But

Sandy found the little voice was very sweet, when its owner had been encouraged into making use of it, and he was surprised to see how much expression the pale blue eyes were capable of. He had discovered nothing remarkable in them, before they had begun to look up at his with a sort of trusting confidence—not with any idea of coquetry, for nothing could be farther than that from Norah Murphy's thoughts. Only she felt grateful to him for his kindness, and still a little shy of him, and so she looked up at him, and then glanced down, and then looked up at him again, all very prettily, as Sandy thought.

Lady Faversham was quite at her ease again, as she saw Sandy talking to this small fair girl by preference; he could not possibly be taken by her to the forgetfulness of Kathleen, she thought. As for Kathleen herself, she was nowhere to be seen, she had disap-

peared quite early in the day, and as Cosmo Beauclerc had disappeared also, it was not difficult to imagine that they might be together somewhere or other, but, indeed, *tête-à-tête* walks were rather the fashion at this pic-nic, as was generally the case at any pic-nic to these very picturesque rocks. Very often nothing came of these walks, but sometimes something did, and on this very afternoon Kate Brady came back to the tea and cakes, with which the party was to break up, engaged to the little Captain Callaghan, who had been paying his court so assiduously to her for a long while past. The others of the party took no such important step, and they came back as free as they went, after a very enjoyable day in the fresh breezy air, but not quite so fancy free. Little Norah Murphy blushed more than once or twice as the thought of Sandy Beaumont presented itself to her on the homeward drive. She was very

young, poor child, and no man had ever paid her any attention before, and of late not many people had been even kind to her, and thus it came about that she could not help thinking a little more than was quite necessary of Sandy Beaumont's kindly care of her among the rocks and the bushes, and worse still, all the strange people, who seemed to be so much at home with one another, and with none of whom she felt at home.

Neither did Cosmo Beauclerc come back quite so fancy free as he went. He had not been fancy free in the drive to the rocks, but in the drive home he was ten times more Kathleen O'Grady's slave than he had ever been before. He was also dreadfully tired, poor little man—terribly tired, and suffering not a little physical pain as well; and it would have been better for him had he never gone to that pic-nic.

"What can we do for you, Mr. Beau-

clerc?" asked Lady Faversham. "You look terribly worn out, would a glass of wine do you any good? There is one of the baskets on the box, and I daresay we could easily get some out."

"Is it this child you are talking of? Nothing for me, thanks; this child always turns all sorts of colours after a day out, so you must not think anything of it, please. Awfully kind of you, though, all the same; but you should have seen me coming back from Epsom. I and a lot of our fellows had gone down on a drag, and it was a drag with me; I could hardly put one foot before the other to get to the top of it when it was time to go home."

"I suppose that was after luncheon, though," said Kathleen, "and we all know what after luncheon means at the Derby."

"No, 'pon honour, Miss O'Grady, I had not touched a thing,. 'Pon honour, I had

not. I was so dreadfully seedy, I could not touch a morsel of the luncheon, and all this child's luncheon, too. Oh, it was too bad; I never felt so miserable in my life."

"Well, you look very miserable now," said Kathleen, laughing. "I begin to be afraid so much of my company is not good for you."

The next day it was all over with Cosmo Beauclerc, he could not hold out any longer, so he made his offer, and was rejected, and then Kathleen, with streaming eyes, flung herself at Lady Faversham's feet, and told her how miserable she was. "He is too good for me—too good for me," she said; "he is such a thorough little gentleman in spite of all that silly slang he has picked up; he is a thorough little gentleman through everything, and he ought to have somebody who could really care for him; but oh, Sybil, I could have been so happy with him!"

"With whom, Kathleen?"

"With Mr. Beauclerc, of course. Have you not seen that he cared for me?"

"I don't think I have seen it. But you could never be happy with him."

"Oh yes, I could—I am sure I could; and I don't know why I don't say yes to him."

"You must marry some one you can respect, Kathleen, and you could never respect Mr. Beauclerc."

"I do respect him," cried Kathleen, raising her face all glowing and hot with excitement; "I do respect him because he loves me, and he tells me so straightforwardly, like a man, and he loves me for myself—nothing else. I never respected him before, but I do now; I respect him just as much as I despise myself—and he is so angry with me, Sybil—so angry, and I don't think he has a right to be angry. I could

not prevent his coming here; I could not tell beforehand that I should not be able to care for him, and I have not encouraged him since I have been here. Of course I had to talk to him, and besides, at first I wished to see what he was like, but he says I knew from the first I did not mean to have him, and that it is all because I care for Sandy, and that I am cruel—cruel——" and Kathleen sobbed aloud.

"I don't think he had any right to say anything of the kind," said Sybil, indignantly. She was not altogether pleased with her friend's conduct, but she could not be angry with her, whilst she seemed so miserable, so for the moment she vented her displeasure upon Cosmo Beauclerc.

Just then Lord Faversham came in, he looked rather grave and put out. "Sybil," he said, "are you busy, or could you go and sit with that fellow Beauclerc a little. He

seems so very seedy to-day; Beaumont thinks if somebody went and talked to him, it would do him good, and women always understand that sort of thing better than men."

"I will go to him," said Lady Faversham, rising at once. "Where is he?"

"In the smoking-room, but he is not smoking, so you had better bring him out, if you don't like to sit there."

"Is he very ill?" asked Kathleen O'Grady rising too now, and going to the window.

"I don't know," said Lord Faversham, staring out at the fresh grass, and bright, gay-coloured flowers. "When he was last at home, his people made him consult some great man or other, and he said unless Cosmo would take care of himself, he would not give him a twelvemonth."

"Yes, I know that," said Kathleen, impatiently, "and one can't fancy him taking care of himself; but I meant, how is he now?"

"He looks very seedy," said Lord Faversham, and then he went away without giving her any more information.

Meanwhile Lady Faversham went down to Cosmo Beauclerc in the smoking-room, and persuaded him to come into her pleasant drawing-room, and lounge away the rest of the morning with her on the window-seat of the one bow window, which at this time a tall graceful Datura tree was perfuming with its long white trumpet-shaped flowers. She was sorry for this young man, whom she yet knew but slightly; but as she looked at his leaden complexion and thin wasted hands, she could not help thinking he had but a short time to live, and felt sorry for him, who was so soon to leave this world, which seemed so pleasant a place that morning, with its sunshine and its flowers, and glad songs of singing birds. "Kathleen thinks he is dying, or she would have accepted him,

I believe, she thought to herself, for though she loved her friend, Lady Faversham could never thoroughly trust her any more than could any one who knew her well; and Kathleen is so very worldly-wise, she must be right about this. He is certain to die very soon! Then she talked light summer weather talk to Cosmo Beauclerc, and tried to cheer him up, for she dare not allude to his rejected suit, thinking he might be offended by her doing so, for the little man had always of late been careful to hide his love from observation.

But Cosmo Beauclerc was fretful with illness and misery, and he could not talk merry random chatter, as was his wont, and in a few minutes he was telling all to Lady Faversham, and this all surprised her not a little, for he did not speak as if he had cared for Kathleen, only as if he had had a wish to marry her, and been disappointed in his wish,

and now thought himself much aggrieved by this disappointment. "You see it has been my one idea for so long," he said, "that if I had but plenty of coin, I could do anything. And now I've got the coin—only I dropped a lot last Derby; but anyhow I had it a short while ago, and what good has it done me? I never was spooney on any girl before, not regularly, to think of marrying and all that; and I never should have thought of it now, only she encouraged me so. I know she is a wonderful beauty, and I should have expected her to think me only fit to black her shoes for her, but she treated me as if she cared about me, and she told me to come down here, and I came; and now I see as plain as possible that she cares for Beaumont, nobody but Beaumont, and only wanted me to draw him on. Oh, I've known girls do worse things than that, and she might have taken me for a little, and then

given me the go-by after all; of course she might have done that, but I think she has treated me badly! 'pon honour I do."

"I don't think she meant to treat you badly," said Lady Faversham, gently; for she thought it was her duty to uphold her friend, hearing her thus attacked, in her absence. "She speaks so very highly of you, and seems so sorry about it."

Then Cosmo Beauclerc looked very grave. "I don't pride myself on being at all more honourable than other men," he said; "but I think I know what a gentleman ought to do, and what he ought not, and why should a lady do things which a man cannot."

Thus he talked on, and it was in vain that Lady Faversham tried to soothe him, and then begged him to lie down and rest; he would not rest, he could not be soothed, but grew more and more excited, soon laughing

in his usual fashion, and telling little anecdotes about his acquaintances, interspersed with long personal reminiscences, till at last she grew afraid he would talk himself hoarse, and went away and left him, as the only kindness she could do him. She had promised Mr. Beauclerc she would not tell even her husband of his offer, and when he joined the rest of the party again he seemed in such very good spirits, that though Lord Faversham had had his suspicions aroused in the earlier part of the day, neither he nor Sandy Beaumont guessed the truth. Even Sybil, who knew it all, could hardly believe that Kathleen's tears, and Cosmo Beauclerc's indignant misery, had not been the work of her own imagination, or a little farce, played only for her benefit, such perfect adepts of the art of dissimulation did they both now show themselves. Still, of the two, it was easy to see who acted most; it was Kath-

leen who always sought out Mr. Beauclerc to appeal to on every possible subject, who, during the remainder of the day, positively made love to him, till at last Lady Faversham began to wonder, did Kathleen regret her refusal, and was she now desirous to retract it; but then one glance at Cosmo Beauclerc's ashy lips, and dull, almost glazed eyes, undeceived her at once. For she saw Cosmo Beauclerc was dying, and that Kathleen was only keeping up appearances, as she considered, and trying at the same time to win the little man for a friend, as she did not consider it consistent with her own interest to have him for a lover.

That evening Cosmo Beauclerc was taken very ill indeed, and a doctor was sent for, and Lady Faversham felt great anxiety when she heard his report, but not even she, who knew all about it, not even Kathleen, who was always so desirous to take all blame

to herself, could lay this illness to the beauty's charge, for the doctor said the attack had long been threatening, and that the pic-nic and the journey down to Faversham, and all Mr. Beauclerc's life for the last month or two, and, he might have added, for all the months he had ever lived, had been madness, and that as people sowed they must reap, and there was but little hope for him now.

"They always say that this child is just about kicking the bucket," said Cosmo, gaily, when he saw Lady Faversham coming back to his room, with a grave face, after her interview with the doctor, for Lady Faversham, whose one hobby was nursing, would not hear of any one nursing her guest but herself. "Don't be anxious about me, Lady Faversham, I'll be right as a trivet in a day or two!" Then Lady Faversham said she hoped so, but they must take care

of him meanwhile; and so for a week or more she nursed him, whilst Lord Faversham provided amusement for his other guests, and drove them over to the Murphys' one day, and invited the Murphys themselves to come over next day, and all the while Sandy waited on his cousin, as if he had been her *cavaliere servente*, but never called her Kathleen, as he had been wont to do, nor ever looked at her, except as people look at each other in passing in the street, without recognition or seeming to take count of each other; and Kathleen O'Grady raged inwardly, and almost hated her cousin in her heart, but still wore the bracelet with his portrait on her arm, and still replied to Sophy Murphy, when that pretty little bit of curiosity exclaimed, "Oh, a photograph, whose is it?" "It is the photograph of the only man I ever really loved;" but she did not display the photograph this time—Sandy

Beaumont himself being in the room, and only Sophy's cousin, little Norah Murphy, saw whose likeness it was, and she could hardly believe her eyes. But that night she felt very sad, poor little girl! So that beautiful Miss O'Grady cared for her cousin, Mr. Beaumont! No wonder, when he was so good and kind, and of course she would marry him some day, for he could not fail to love her in return, so beautiful and charming as she was; but could they be engaged that she should speak of her love for him thus openly? And if so, why did he never speak to her? Poor little Norah Murphy, it was very puzzling to her, and she thought about it all for a long time before she fell asleep that night, all the while telling herself that she had no business to think about it, or to be in any way specially interested.

Meanwhile, though Lady Faversham was nursing Cosmo Beauclerc, she was not

obliged to remain with him all day long, and though she did not care to go to her friends' houses in order to see them, she had plenty of time to see them when they came to her, and she was distressed as she saw, or thought she saw, that little Norah Murphy was beginning to care for Sandy Beaumont. Norah Murphy was as shy and retiring as any girl that ever breathed, but she was not aware herself that she was in love with Mr. Beaumont, who she supposed was some day soon going to marry his beautiful cousin, only she thought him the kindest, manliest man she had ever yet come in contact with, so she followed him about with her sweet blue eyes, which looked very much like two of the forget-me-nots from that sacred inner garden of the Cottage, but that one missed the gold centre; and this following him about with her eyes Lady Faversham noticed, and from it she drew

her own inferences. Sandy himself also noticed this; he saw that the little girl was so very shy of him that she blushed each time he spoke to her, and her voice trembled in replying to him, and yet that her face brightened as it never brightened when any one else spoke to her, and one day sitting in the twilight, talking to Lady Faversham that easy yet confidential talk which seemed always to come naturally to the surface in any *tête-à-tête* with this grave young Countess, he looked away from her, and said, speaking more abruptly than he had yet spoken: "I want to consult you, Lady Faversham; women are always said to see such things so much quicker than men. Do you think that little Miss Murphy cares for any one in particular?"

"Which? Sophy?" said Lady Faversham, purposely misunderstanding him.

"No, Norah," replied Sandy, speaking the

name very softly, as if it had already becom a peculiar name to him.

"Yes, I am afraid she is going to be in love with you," said Lady Faversham, now thoroughly ashamed of her fruitless subterfuge.

"You think so too," said Sandy, glancing quickly up at her, and then looking away again. "I fancied I had noticed something of the kind lately. She is such an artless little thing that she could not possibly conceal any feeling, however little she felt it; but I hoped—at least I thought that I might be mistaken."

"I do not think you are mistaken," said Lady Faversham, "and you must not be so kind to her for the future, poor little girl. She might get to care very much, and I should not like to see her unhappy, for she is a good little thing, though, of course, you could never care for her."

"Why not?" and that look of having

lost himself came over Sandy's face very visibly, even in the fast darkening twilight. "She has a very sweet little face, and I think I have never seen softer eyes," he added, half to himself.

"Yes," said Lady Faversham, "her eyes are very pretty certainly, when one can see them; but there is nothing in her, I should say."

"I don't know that," replied Sandy. "I fancy there is a great deal more than one would think at first. That great shyness misleads one, and, now that I know her better, she does not seem to me in the least stupid."

"No; not stupid, perhaps, but commonplace. Quite a commonplace sort of girl," said Lady Faversham, happy in the belief that she had at last hit upon the great defect in Norah Murphy, a girl who had never interested her in the least.

"The commonplace idea of a woman certainly," said Sandy, very slowly, "gentle, amiable, and retiring. But I can't say I have found such characters commonplace; indeed, they seem to me very rarely to be met with."

"Oh, but she is not the sort of girl you ought to marry," cried Lady Faversham, in despair. "You ought to marry some one beautiful, and noble, and generous—like your cousin, in short."

"Like Kathleen!" exclaimed Sandy, indignantly. "I hope I may never meet with any one like her again."

And he spoke as if no idea of marrying her himself could ever possibly present itself to his mind.

Then Lady Faversham saw she had made a mistake in introducing Miss O'Grady's name into this conversation, and that it would be more to the purpose to talk of Norah

Murphy, if she wished to please Sandy, and she did wish to do so very much, even at the cost of her own favourite scheme; so she said, "Perhaps it is because I know Norah Murphy so little, that I do not care for her. I fancy she is one of those girls who take a long time to know."

"Do you?" said Sandy. "I have only known her about a fortnight, and she seems to me one of those affectionate little things whom every one must like at once. I only wish I had more love to give her, but I think I could make her happy—if she cared for me, I mean."

"And *you* think that right, Mr. Beaumont, to marry a girl whom you yourself regret you cannot really love?"

"Yes, if she cares for me," said Sandy. "I should not like to make her unhappy then, and she would be a very dear little wife. I think there would have to be some-

thing very wrong in the man himself, who did not soon grow fond of such a little wife as she would make."

Then Lady Faversham sighed; but if those really were Mr. Beaumont's views, she could not argue the matter with him; she supposed men thought differently from women, but the exchange seemed to her an unequal one—the whole of Norah Murphy's heart for only so much fondness as no man could fail to give to such a dear little wife, when once she had become his own. And while she was thinking about this, Kathleen came into the room, already dressed for dinner in a long yellow silk dress, with golden stars stuck in her coronet of plaits; and Sybil saw Sandy look at her approvingly, as if he admired her appearance that night.

"How yellow suits you, Kathleen," he said. It was the first time he had addressed her by her name since he had come back from

Australia; but Lady Faversham noticed he said it quite naturally, as if for the moment he forgot he had not called her so of late; and there was none of that mellow softness in his voice that there had been, when Sybil just now had pretended to make a mistake between the cousins, and Sandy answered, "No, Norah."

"What has Sandy been talking to you about in the twilight?" asked Kathleen, sinking down into the pleasant window-seat as he left it, and went away to prepare for dinner. "You looked quite sentimental when I came in."

"We were talking of the Murphys," said Lady Faversham, who did not feel sure whether it would not be better to tell Kathleen all at once—better for her own plan, and fairer to her friend.

"Is Sandy going to marry Norah Murphy?" asked Kathleen again, playing with some

flowers, that thrust their heads in through the window, as if they would like to know what was going on inside, and were confident the inner world would be as much gladdened by their fragrance, as the garden world outside.

"I don't know," said Lady Faversham, reluctantly. "I half think he will end by that," she added.

"She will make him a very good little wife," said Kathleen; "I can fancy Sandy and Norah Murphy very happy together."

"Can you—I can't?" and Lady Faversham felt more and more astonishment at the quietness of her friend, from whom she had been prepared for some paroxysm of grief or love for Sandy, or jealousy of Norah Murphy.

But Kathleen appeared perfectly calm; she went on playing with the roses, hardly perhaps torturing them so much as usual, for

she was of a terribly destructive turn, and on Lord Faversham's entrance she began a bantering conversation, such as it was often her pleasure to keep up with him. The clergyman of the parish dined at the Cottage that night; he had dined there once or twice before during Kathleen's stay, and each time he had admired Miss O'Grady very much, but on this occasion he was perfectly dazzled. The mirth grew fast and furious, and everyone joined in it to the forgetfulness of Cosmo Beauclerc lying alone and suffering upstairs, until Sybil was seized with qualms of conscience, and going upstairs to cheer him up a little, found that Sandy, who had slipped out of the drawing-room a few minutes before her, had forestalled her intention, and was sitting by his bedside.

Cosmo seemed both low and irritable that night; he was even impatient to get away from the Cottage, declaring he was

sure he was well enough to move, and that doctors were all dreadful old humbugs, and Lady Faversham and Sandy had some difficulty in soothing him, and making him promise to spend the next day lying still again, instead of ordering his servant to pack his portmanteau, and taking himself off to the Curragh at once. When they left him, Sandy said to Lady Faversham, "I think it is Kathleen's being here that fevers him so much. Very likely he is vexed at not being able to see more of her—is she going to stay here long?"

"I had hoped she would have paid me quite a long visit," said Lady Faversham; "but I am afraid you are right, and that her being here is bad for Mr. Beauclerc, and certainly he cannot go away at present."

While they were thus speaking of her, Kathleen had gone up to her own room, and was sitting there with her hair pushed back

from her face, her face buried in her hands not sobbing—it was not Kathleen's way now to sob, when she was by herself—only breathing very hard and quickly, as if there were something choking her, with a strange catching every now and then, that would very easily have changed into a sob, had any one been by to hear and sympathize. But she had dismissed her maid, and was alone with no one by to hear her sob, so she only breathed quickly and convulsively, her bosom heaving, and her hands locked tightly, almost agonizingly tightly together. At last she raised her face, and then it looked strangely white, though perhaps that was owing to the moonlight streaming in full upon her; anyhow her face looked strangely white, and her lips looked white also, as she muttered to herself, "I will do it. I will do my worst. I *will* make him feel at last."

Then she shook her fist at the moon

as it were, for there was nothing else to shake it at, and she seemed to hate its calm, mild brilliance, as she stared at it with dazzled eyes. After that she half-closed the window, and sitting down before the looking-glass, unpinned the long massive plaits, and quickly let a shower of gold fall loose about her shoulders. Then she looked at herself in the glass, looking at her own reflection, curiously scrutinizing it, as if it were the reflection of some one else whom she had never rightly seen before. "Very beautiful!" she murmured, with a sort of instinctive pleasure in the beauty she thus saw; "and not a wicked-looking face either. It does not look deceitful or cruel—proud rather, not that I am proud, God knows—and passionate perhaps, but not with the passion of bad temper. No, certainly not a bad face; it cannot be that which prejudices him against me. It must be myself," she said;

"he knows me myself—he does not care about my face any longer, he knows what I am really, and he hates me."

Then she started up from the glass, and walked up and down the room with long, angry steps, wringing her hands as she walked; but after a little a softer mood came over her. "Oh, Sandy, Sandy," she said, with the large tears now fast following each other down her cheeks, "I would have done so much to make you happy. I would have done everything that woman could, if only to make up for the pain I gave you long ago. I would have loved you so dearly, Sandy; no man could have a more loving wife than I would have been to you, if only you would have had it so; but you do not choose it, Sandy; you choose to have Norah Murphy. Oh, I wish I could be jealous of her, I wish I could hate her, there would be some comfort even in that; but I cannot, for I know you do

not love her, you could not possibly." Then she flung herself upon her bed, and writhed there in her agony, but only for a minute or two; after that she got up and walked about the room again, with a soft smile now shimmering over her tear-stained face.

"Poor little Norah, I daresay she will make him very happy, she is just what men fancy in a wife—a pretty, quiet little doll, who dares not even call her soul her own, but oh, Sandy—my Sandy!" and then the smile vanished from her face, and she threw herself upon her knees beside her bed, and sobbed as she had not sobbed since Sandy had gone away to Australia, and she had told herself it was all her fault, and spent the nights in crying for his sake.

The next day it was settled somehow, no one ever quite understood how, nor who proposed it, but somehow or another it was settled that Kathleen should go away from

the Cottage, and two days after that she was gone, and Lady Faversham was surprised to find that, in the first instance, she felt almost relieved by her absence. She had given up all hopes of ever arranging a marriage between Sandy Beaumont and his cousin, her favourite friend, and indeed she was not quite certain that she altogether desired it any longer. There was a sternness about Sandy now, which she feared might have dangerous consequences with a girl like Kathleen, high-spirited and wilful, and altogether unaccustomed to obey, or even to be guided by the counsels of another. Kathleen, Lady Faversham thought, would be likely to try her husband's patience, whoever he might be, and Sandy, she feared, would have very little patience with the womanly caprices of his wife. He might be very patient with the caprices of those with whom he was brought into passing contact, but it seemed to Lady

Faversham that he was very determined to be master in his own house, and that he would not be very likely to listen to any arguments or entreaties there; he would do his best to make his wife happy, of that she was sure; but then his wife must be happy. She did not think that Sandy Beaumont, such as he now was, would ever do anything more, he would do his duty himself, but then other people must do their duty also: he would make no allowances.

Lady Faversham was led into this train of thought by observing the manner in which he took leave of Kathleen. He was not going with her to the station, and when she came into the room where he was sitting writing, already dressed to go, he got up and said, "Good-bye, Kathleen," kissing her as he spoke, but almost at the same minute taking from her her travelling-bag. "Let me carry this for you," as if this was his most im-

portant business at the moment, and the leave-taking a mere secondary consideration. He went out to the front door with Kathleen and Lady Faversham, and assisted them to seat themselves comfortably in the pony carriage, and was very careful to see that Kathleen had left nothing behind her, and then he stood off from the carriage, as if he had already taken leave of her, and was only waiting to see them drive off before going back to the house and resuming his own interrupted occupation.

Lord Faversham had been obliged to go away that day on magisterial business, and Sybil had not much expected that Sandy Beaumont would care to join her in escorting his cousin to the station, but she was a little surprised by his coldness now. It pained her: it was not what she would ever have thought of Sandy in the old days; but if Kathleen was pained, she certainly did not

show it, only as the carriage was just about to drive off, she shook out the loose dust-cloak that she had thrown round herself, a light gossamer sort of fabric, that looked a good deal more ornamental than useful, and appearing but now to have established herself in the carriage, turned round to Sandy as though she had never said good-bye to him yet.

"Good-bye, dear old boy," she said, "write to me soon one of your nice old letters; and mind," this she added in a lower tone, "I expect to be told how you are going to be married very soon to somebody very charming —good-bye, Sandy." She had put her arms round his neck, and now she kissed him twice before she released him again, then she shook herself straight once more, and the pony carriage moved off slowly, only Kathleen turned round again. "What message for mother, Sandy," she asked.

"I hope she is quite well," he replied.

Lady Faversham could not help turning round to look at him also then. This message to Lady Killowen struck her as so very cold from the nephew, whom she had treated almost as her own son till the last five years, during which time she had not seen him. Sandy was standing in the shadow looking after them, but with a face that expressed nothing; he stood there quite erect, but looking very Bushy and stolid, and thus they drove away, and left Sandy Beaumont standing in the shadow.

CHAPTER VI.

TOO LATE.

Cosmo Beauclerc had insisted on being dressed and allowed to go downstairs on the day of Kathleen O'Grady's departure. She had said good-bye to him alone, though when, Lady Faversham could never make out exactly, any more than she could in the least make out what had passed between them on the occasion; but, when she returned from taking her friend to the station, she found Cosmo fallen asleep over a novel, which apparently he had been trying to read, until at last it had really bored him too much. Nearly everything bored the little man that required him to sit still, or demanded any

attention of him; but it was so difficult for him to get any sleep in those days that Lady Faversham could not but be grateful to the novel for having put him to sleep; and she took it as a good omen, and for a moment hoped almost that he might get well, now the excitement attendant on Kathleen O'Grady's presence in the same house had been removed.

But only for a moment did she hope this. Then she glanced once more at Cosmo Beauclerc, and at once the tears filled her large sad eyes. A change had come over the little man of late. He was no longer the "pleasant companion," the "good fellow," or the "young reprobate," that his friends and acquaintance had been wont to call him, according to their various degrees of liking for him. No; he was not actually dying yet, but, as far as doing anything went, his life might be considered ended; and with this

near approach of death Cosmo Beauclerc had grown pathetic.

There was something, indeed, almost tragic about him to Lady Faversham's mind, as she sat beside him, and watched him thus quietly sleeping, with the novel still open in his hand. She had been kind to him of late, and thus had grown fond of him; but otherwise she would never have cared for this young man, who was to her but one of a class of young men of whom she had heard more than she had known of them herself individually. The class of young men of whom it is said, they are no one's enemies but their own; yet who contrive, notwithstanding, to do a good deal of mischief in the course of their little lives—and their lives are rarely long, or marked by any great events. Of too weak constitutions to indulge in any great excess; of too weak characters to aspire to any grandeur in their deeds;

they yet, as far as in them lies, choose the evil and reject the good. They make a desolation of one woman's life at least, for their mothers mostly have grey hairs before their time, and tell-tale lines about their sorrowful eyes. They mostly start with little money, and end with less. They are mostly good friends with the "gentlemen of the ring," and at daggers drawn with their tailors, whom they are none the less for ever favouring with fresh orders. They swear, and smoke, and drink a little—not much; they cannot stand much of that. They avoid churches, and affect theatres. They are slangy and ignorant, and not a little vain of being so. They do their little best to bring the ancient name of gentleman into disrepute, and yet pride themselves, notwithstanding, on owning it. And with all this they are good-tempered, and easily pleased; and, where no exertion is required, they are even

good-natured; always ready to "get up behind" a friend, or take his duty for him when they are themselves unable to get leave, for they are mostly in the army, these young men. And with all these faults, or in spite of all these faults, they are very generally liked amongst men, their contemporaries, and are always in high favour in a ball-room, at least. Then some day their butterfly life comes to an end, and every one says of them, "Poor Charlie!" or "Poor Harry!" or "Poor Cosmo!" as the case may be, and the world goes on as before. There are always plenty of others like them to fill up the place they have left, and no one thinks any more of the one who is dead, nor of what has become of him, and the talent intrusted to him—a small one, perhaps, but still only given on trust. And where is it now? Not simply buried in the earth. Not even that, alas! Charlie or Harry was hardly so selfish and

worthless a creature, when born into the world a helpless baby, as when he slipped out of it a useless man. What becomes of him? "There was so much good in him! Nobody's enemy but his own!" says the world. Well, so be it!

But Lady Faversham could not help thinking what would become of Cosmo Beauclerc, who was, after all, a very favourable specimen of the class we have been describing—cleverer, kindlier, more amusing than the most part of them; a man, too, who had almost always a good word for every one, and not only good words but good thoughts of them also. He was well disposed towards all the world though he had never cared to put those good dispositions into practice, any more than he had ever taken the trouble to think good thoughts about himself. If he had, perchance, the little man's career in life might have been

very different. If he had ever realized at any period of his life how much good there was in him, if any one of his numerous friends had ever brought home to him that there was something in him, that something might be made of him, that he might do something in the world. But now it was too late: no more doing for Cosmo Beauclerc in this life, and little enough had there been already—little enough of direct doing, but who can estimate the indirect influence?

His mother, a clever and not unambitious woman, had married his father in a fit of romantic love, fancying him for the moment the hero of her youthful dreams, who, guided by her superior talents—for even then she acknowledged to herself that her talents were superior to his—might yet make a figure in the world and distinguish himself, and his wife through himself. Hers, she fancied, would be the proud boast that

she had rescued from lethargy, and consequent neglect, qualities that were worthy to be known. But she had soon found out her mistake. In the elder Beauclerc these qualities were but imaginary; he had been in love with her, and he had been the first man to be so, and accordingly she invested him with a halo of her own making. When she saw through the golden glory that she herself had thrown around him, she repelled his caresses which had now become loathsome to her. And then he ceased to love her also, and she saw more clearly than before the utter nothingliness of the commonplace handsome gentleman whom she had mistaken for a hero.

Then this handsome gentleman, being repelled at home, sought consolation in other quarters, and Mrs. Beauclerc in the misery of ungratified ambition and unsatisfied love, sought consolation also, but not in the same

quarters as her husband; she rather sought it in Platonic affection with other minds of like nature as her own. Unfortunately, she was not long in finding these, and before young Cosmo had ended his first year in this life, his parents had already ceased to be on any terms but those of courteous intercourse with one another. It had never become worse than this; he was a gentleman and she was a lady, and gradually as they had grown older and become more accustomed to each other's ways of going on, they had learnt to be on even better terms with one another—he greatly respecting and admiring her intellect, and she having a sort of pitying fondness for the man who she now supposed could not help being stupid, and was still handsomer and more courteous in his bearing than any other gentleman in the county. They each entertained a great regard for the other, and the neighbours generally, seeing

them always about together, and persistently keeping up appearances—all the more so because there was so little reality behind—believed them to be upon the best of terms. But there was very little love between the father and mother of Cosmo Beauclerc, and long before their son had reached what are commonly considered years of understanding, he had perfectly understood this, and seen through and sometimes laughed at the thin veil of conversational propriety which his parents threw over their relations with each other.

It might have been expected that Mrs. Beauclerc, disappointed in her husband, would have turned with renewed love to her son; but she dreaded being disappointed again, and in truth she was, as women go, very heartless. It had at first been her ambition rather than her love that had been wrecked on finding out her mistake in Cosmo's father.

As to his father, he was not a man ever likely to care much about his children; a daughter he might have liked had she been pretty, but his son only made himself appear older and awakened his jealousy of the youth, which having once lost he was still always endeavouring to retain in appearance. So Cosmo Beauclerc went to school, and came home for the holidays, and amused himself as best he could, winning a ready affection from his schoolfellows, but never winning any portion of affection from the father and mother, who looked upon him rather as an expense than otherwise. From neither did he receive any loving teaching, from neither did he receive any encouragement as to his boyish studies, what wonder then was it that, with a disposition always ready for amusement, and capable of extracting it from almost anything, he slipped into Sandhurst more by a lucky chance than otherwise, and

having thus become one of that never very ruly body, was soon well known among its unruliest members. Then there were long bills to pay, and then once more there were bills, and then once again, and when his father had for the third time paid all the debts which the son acknowledged, Cosmo Beauclerc was informed that henceforward he had his allowance, and he need not look for any further assistance from home.

"The estate is entailed, that you know," said his father; "but, as you also perhaps know, it is already heavily mortgaged. Any money that you can obtain by post obits, or otherwise, you are at perfect liberty to obtain. I shall certainly not interfere with you; but, as far as I can see, my life is still a better one than yours, and perhaps the Jews may think that also."

These were the last words his father had

spoken to Cosmo Beauclerc, now some time ago. Since then he had come into his scapegrace uncle's fortune; but he had never even communicated the fact to either of his parents, leaving them to hear of it as chance might direct; and now his father's words seemed coming true, for the elder Beauclerc was still a hale man, while his son, with a death-like palor, lay sleeping away an hour or two of his short lease of life in the pleasant drawing-room of Faversham Cottage, with the young Countess watching beside him, to guard him from all possible noise or disturbance.

It was a great trial to Lady Faversham, this illness of Cosmo Beauclerc's. She would so willingly have talked of religion to the young man; but what could she say to a man who quoted texts of Scripture far more glibly than she could (his memory had always been one of Cosmo's strong points,

and even he, butterfly that he was, had once or twice had his attention called to some of the leading questions of the day, and through them to religion), and who told her, quite frankly, that he did not think one was meant to believe those texts; that, indeed, he was confident there was some quite simple manner of explaining them away, though, "of course this child don't know it," he would add in his provokingly careless fashion? "But, 'pon honour, Lady Faversham, I have thought about it a great deal, and my uncle the Dean of St. John's explained it all to me once. I heard him talking it all over with Cardinal Wiseman one day, and, 'pon honour, I assure you I decided I was a Roman Catholic myself. Only it is such a bore being received, you know, and I had just got my leave, and Chantilly coming on. You have never been to Chantilly, have you?"

Another day he would assure her, equally positively, that he thought the Quakers were in the right. "You see, it is all U P with them," he would say; "they will be coming round and dressing like other people soon, and as long as they will say 'Thou,' of course no gentleman could join them—it would be such precious bad form; but my old nurse was a Quaker, and, 'pon honour, she was the best woman I have ever known. Her husband was a low, Unitarian sort of fellow, and at the last election he got so beastly drunk, I nearly died of laughing. Oh, it was the best thing you ever saw! But he went home to his wife, and beat her nearly within an inch of her life, and, will you believe it, she wouldn't tell of him, though she could hardly crawl to the door to open it for me when I went to see her a few days after: for I had heard of it from their neighbours. But she wouldn't own to a word of

truth in what they said, and swore he had never laid a finger on her, and came home grave as a judge. I dare say he had," said Cosmo, laughing again at the recollection; "why, I pitched him myself into the barrow in which he was taken home. But I admire a woman who stands up for her husband in that way; she was the best woman I have ever known, and she was a dreadfully bigoted Quaker, though she did marry a Unitarian. Yes, if this child thought more of such things, he'd be turning Quaker, I expect: for I don't think much of the Prayer-book, and as to the clergymen of the Church of England, they are very good fellows, those I have happened to come across; but take them as a body, and they are the greatest set of hypocrites possible, thinking of nothing but the loaves and fishes. Why, look at this Irish question now, what a fuss they are making about it, and there is no doctrine in

danger, oh, no! nothing but the loaves and fishes!"

What could Lady Faversham say to a young man who chattered on in this style? She could think of nothing to say, so she had at first persuaded herself that she must not excite him. The doctor had of course, as is usual in such cases, warned her that any excitement might prove fatal; but, though she tried to lull her conscience to rest in this way, she knew well enough that no religious conversations she might attempt to hold with him would excite Cosmo Beauclerc in the least, that it would be better for him, really, if they would, though it might perhaps be dangerous for his health. Once or twice she thought of sending for the parish clergyman to talk to him; but when she at last suggested this to Cosmo Beauclerk, he told her at once quite plainly that he would not see him, and if any clergyman

came into his sick-room, he should just get up at once, and go out of it himself, however he might be. "I don't want to be bored when I'm seedy," he said; "it is bad enough when one is well, and this child has had plenty of talking to, I can assure you, Lady Faversham. Do you think my uncle has never talked to me? And plenty of old ladies have wished to convert me, and given me tracts; but I am afraid I am a heathen still, for I never read any of them except one, which a dear old thing insisted on my reading before I left her; and had not I to bolt in double quick time afterwards! Oh, I assure you, I nearly split with laughing, and did not know what to do lest the good soul should find me out. Oh, this child has had quite enough of preaching, so don't send for the parson, will you? It would be no use, that I can tell you."

And as the parson in question was barely

older than Cosmo Beauclerc, and about as unversed in the world's ways as the latter was knowing in them, Lady Faversham feared it would be of no use, even if Cosmo did consent to listen to him, which she saw clearly he would not do, unless she begged it of him as a personal favour, in which case she still feared that he might be one too many for the parson, as he would have said himself, though the latter was a thoroughly good young man, who was getting on very well with the poor Irish Protestants around him, and even with some of their Roman Catholic brethren, in a very quiet way. She was afraid to ask her husband to talk to Cosmo Beauclerc, for she knew that Lord Faversham was always very loath to talk of his religious belief, greatly preferring testifying to it by his actions, added to which he was so impressionable that she was quite afraid of letting him ever sit with Cosmo

Beauclerc. He was so very far from strong himself, that the sight of another young man of his own standing succumbing to sickness seemed to have a peculiarly depressing effect upon him, and already Sybil was quite as anxious to provide such occupation for her husband as should distract his thoughts from their invalid guest, as she was to see that that guest himself was properly cared for and attended upon. So, in this perplexity of her mind, being unable to appeal to her husband, she naturally had recourse to Sandy Beaumont; and hearing him come into the next room, left her post by Cosmo Beauclerc's side, and going into the next room began to discuss his fate with Sandy Beaumont, of whose views on the subject she was as yet completely ignorant.

"Don't make a noise, please," she said in her softest tones; "Mr. Beauclerc is asleep. Come outside into the garden, and

talk to me a little, and then we can see that no one passes through to disturb him. It is such a great thing for him to have a little sleep."

"Yes, I suppose it is the best chance for him," said Sandy.

"Oh, Mr. Beaumont, do you think there is any hope for him? Do you think he can possibly recover?"

"What does the doctor say? He ought to know better than I can."

"He says there is none," said Lady Faversham, sadly; "it may be weeks, or it may be months ——," and then her voice broke down. She had grown fond of Cosmo while nursing him, and besides she was never very strong, and her one hobby was nursing. She could not bear that her patients should not recover.

"You are tiring yourself too much, you must let me be his nurse," said Sandy,

kindly, trying to take no notice of her tears, as he had long ago decided was the best way with women. "But I had no idea he was so bad. Poor fellow!" he exclaimed, after a moment's thought, in a tone of the deepest compassion.

"Do you think this world so pleasant that any one is to be much pitied for leaving it?" asked Lady Faversham, now quietly drying her tears.

"I don't know that; I think it very pleasant," said Sandy, rather ruefully; "but I think the time to die is after having done something, not before; and poor Beauclerc has not done very much. Poor fellow! he has been nobody's enemy but his own."

"I am afraid he has been a very great enemy to himself, though," suggested Sybil, timidly.

"Yes, I daresay. I don't know much

about him. He always seemed a very cheery little fellow."

"Yes, very cheery; but —— don't you think you could talk to him a little, Mr. Beaumont—about religion, I mean? It seems so dreadful to think of his dying quite unprepared, and I am afraid he is quite so as yet."

Then Sandy looked up a little surprised. "And you wish me to prepare him?"

"Yes, if you would. I have tried, but I think a man could do it so much better. He does not mind what I say, he treats it as a matter of course that women should care about religion, and I can't ask Faversham, or I am sure he would; but it would be so bad for him. Anything of the kind would try him dreadfully; but if you would, you might do so much good."

"My dear Lady Faversham," said Sandy, still a little surprised, "do you know that you

are asking a service of a very incompetent person? Why do you not ask a clergyman, surely he would do it much better?"

"Mr. Beauclerc would not listen to him, and even if he would, he would consider a clergyman at least as much bound to talk about religion as a woman. It would be quite different if you spoke to him."

"Do you really think so?" said Sandy, slowly; it seemed to be quite a new idea to him. "And do you fancy that if Beauclerc has lived up to his present age without religion, anything that any one might say to him could make any difference in the end? I fear it would require a far better man than I am to have any effect upon him now!"

Lady Faversham looked vexed. This was too much what she thought herself, and yet she could not bear to think that there was no hope for Cosmo Beauclerc, and how could there be any if no one spoke to him,

and bade him bethink himself while yet there was time? at last she said, "At what period of Mr. Beauclerc's life do you think it would have done any good to speak to him about religion?"

Sandy coloured. "You are right, Lady Faversham, and I am wrong," he said, quickly. "Of course, one must never say too late! but just do what one can; only can you not think of somebody better than I am? Indeed, I do not feel myself worthy for this good work to which you have called me."

Then with her eyes blinded with tears, Sybil said to him, that his very thought of his unworthiness made him the more worthy, and that she knew of no better man whom she could ask; and after a little, Sandy said that he would do what he could, and take the first opportunity of talking to Cosmo Beauclerc. "Only," he said, "don't expect any great results, for as the tree falls it must

lie, and though you have reproved me once; yes, you have indeed, and I thank you for it, and shall not quickly forget your reproof again, I hope; yet my faith is not great enough for me to believe in any great change in a man like Beauclerc. He will die as he has lived, I believe, whoever speaks to him, but I will do my best, only I wish I had thought of these things more."

Then the two sat silent for a little, each following out their own train of thought, till Lord Faversham came in fresh from his magisterial business, and greeted them with the inquiry, "How is Cosmo, now?"

"He is asleep, and that is the best thing for him," said Sybil, looking up rather anxiously, for she had hoped her husband might have forgotten him a little during his day away; she so dreaded his having his thoughts turned to sickness, for the boy Earl was imaginative, and Sybil had lived too

much in the warm southern places, in which sick people congregate, not to know but too well the bad effect that one invalid often has upon another.

Lord Faversham saw her glance of anxiety, and gently stroked her brown hair with one of his small white hands, soft and delicate as any woman's, then he said, "You must not look so sad about him, dearest, or Beaumont will think me a cruel husband, who ride about the country amusing myself all day long, and leave my wife to fag herself to death at home, and all the time you know I am the most submissive of husbands, for it is only in obedience to your orders that I do not nurse poor dear Cosmo myself."

"Yes, I know it is," said Sybil, smiling the sweet smile, which she seemed to reserve for her husband alone, "and you have not been riding about amusing yourself to-day. Tell us what you have been doing; Mr. Beau-

mont and I want a little news of the outer world to enliven us."

Then Lord Faversham gave a little account of his experiences that day, which Sybil listened to attentively, asking questions every now and then with great apparent interest, and Lord Faversham answered these questions as if he were also much interested; but Sandy could not help smiling at the little innocent deception they thus played off upon each other, when directly Sybil left the room the young Earl turned to him, and asked in quite a different tone, "Tell me, Beaumont, what do you think about Cosmo? I see that Sybil is dreadfully afraid of my hearing anything about him, so I don't want to worry her with asking, and somehow I have always managed to miss the doctor lately."

"I am afraid he can't last long," said Sandy.

"Do you mean he is dying?" and at

once the boy Earl turned so very white, that Sandy would have given a good deal to have had his words back again.

"He may hold out some time. I daresay he'll live for some months yet," he hastened to say. "Faversham, my dear fellow, what is the matter with you? Here, I'll fetch you some water;" and in a moment Sandy returned with a tumbler of water, which Lord Faversham gulped down pale and trembling.

"You see, it has been a longer day than I am accustomed to, and I am quite tired out," he said, apologetically.

"Of course you are, and I was a fool not to see it, and hold my tongue."

"But I asked you," said Lord Faversham, still very faintly; then he got up. "I shall go and lie quiet, and rest a little, I think," he said. "You won't tell Lady Faversham, will you?" he added, anxiously;

"she gets so anxious if am ill at all, and this is nothing."

"No, I won't tell her; but I don't half like your being alone. Let me come and sit with you."

"No; I am too tired to talk, thanks," said Lord Faversham. Then as he was opening the door of the room, he came back again. "Don't think me too cowardly, please, Beaumont; but I have been battling with death so long, that I fear I have come to regard it as something very terrible. You see, all my life I have only just been kept alive, and so much trouble has been taken about it, that I fancy it is only natural that I have learnt to regard dying as *the* thing to be most avoided, and now Cosmo—the same age—under my very roof. It gave me a turn at first, and I had rather get accustomed to the idea by myself. Thank you all the same, old fellow." Then Lord Faver-

sham wrung Sandy Beaumont's hand, and with cheeks now scarlet at the confession he had just made, quickly left the room.

When he next came downstairs there was a crimson spot on either cheek, but otherwise he looked very pale, and Sandy saw Lady Faversham glance at him more than once during dinner with an anxious wistful glance. The dinner was very quiet without Kathleen's merry repartees and gurgling laughter, and a gloom seemed to have fallen over the little party, which felt so much smaller now that the golden-haired beauty had gone away from them.

"How quiet the garden looks to-night," said Sandy, almost sentimentally, as they sat over dessert, looking out among the flowers. "Somehow the whole thing looks colourless. I think it must be Kathleen's crimson cloak that I miss, she was always leaving it about, somewhere or other."

"It is not only the cloak," began Lady Faversham, and then she hesitated, but Lord Faversham went on with her speech for her. "No, it is not only the cloak we miss, it is Miss O'Grady herself. She was the life of us all, and so no wonder, if we feel a little dull to-night. I suppose we shall get accustomed to it after a time, but it is wonderful how one misses any one who has been staying in the same house, even for a few days, and especially any one like Miss O'Grady. I am sure I think just as you do, Beaumont, that the garden looks quite colourless to-night."

"Dear Kathleen," said Sybil, thinking more affectionately of her friend than she had yet thought of her since her departure; "I hope she is getting on all right with her journey. Somehow I always feel so nervous when any one I care about is travelling."

"So do I," said Sandy, looking up with a smile at discovering this new sympathy be-

tween them; "and there are such frightful railway accidents."

"Now, really Beaumont, I am surprised," exclaimed Lord Faversham, "women never will be guided by statistics, but surely you must know——"

"I am sorry to say numbers never convey any idea to my mind," interrupted Sandy, "at least, not when they are big numbers, as I am sure they must be about railway accidents. No, now don't tell me they are not big, Faversham; I feel as if there was a cloud over me to-night, and much the most satisfactory way of accounting for it is, that there is something awful happening far away."

"Oh, but I hope not," cried Sybil, growing rather pale. "And I feel as if there was a cloud over me, too."

"So do I," said Lord Faversham, "it is all Miss O'Grady's fault for going away and leaving us to mope by ourselves. I suppose

those stupid children have gone to bed, Sybil, or I feel just inclined for a game of romps with them."

"Oh, Faversham, when you know they ought to have been asleep for an hour or more."

"Stupid little things," said Lord Faversham, "they seem to me to do nothing but sleep. I know I never see them now."

"No, nor do I," said Sandy. "Lady Faversham, I begin to think you are an unnatural mother, and always keep them locked up."

"You see Kathleen can't bear children," replied Sybil, lightly, "so I was obliged to keep them out of the way; but now you shall be punished for thinking me unnatural, Mr. Beaumont, and whether you like it or not, you shall come up to the nursery, and see them asleep. You are to come too, Faversham, so don't look so lazy."

"I am afraid it is no punishment to me," replied Sandy, "children and dogs both have the bad taste to like me, and so I can't but return the compliment by liking them a little. However, I must say I prefer them when they are awake."

But in spite of this preference of Sandy's the three went upstairs now, and looked at the sleeping children, lying so still in their little cots; rosy Milly, with a yet rosier doll clasped tight within her fat loving fingers, and the pale little heir to all the Faversham estates lying so still, with such a beatific smile parting the tender child lips, that it was difficult to believe he had not already followed some of the many Favershams, who had gone before him, and was even now enjoying that "radiancy of glory, that light beyond compare;" but as Sandy watched the boy Earl hanging over his sleeping child, he could not help wondering

to himself how soon that pale child would be called on to fill up the place of the fragile still cherub-like father, hardly more than a boy himself yet. For Lord Faversham, with waxen cheeks, pale but for that one crimson spot in the middle of each, looked more like a cherub, and younger than ever on this evening. But he seemed also very tired, and soon proposed leaving the children, and going to sit with Beauclerc a little. Of this, however, Sybil would not hear, she declared she was going to sit with him herself, and that she was sure he would much prefer her society to her husband's, so Lord Faversham acquiesced with a little smile, and carried off Sandy to the smoking-room, while Sybil, with her heart still aching for her husband, went to talk to Cosmo Beauclerc, and to be pained afresh by the little man's silly frivolous talk. It might have been pleasant enough in a ball-room, but it sounded awful

on what she regarded as a deathbed. And as she talked to him she thought how ill her husband had looked that night, and wondered what could be the cause, and intermingled with her anxiety about him, it occurred to her mind, ever and anon, that stolid though Sandy had seemed during the morning, he had been almost sentimental all that evening, and though he alone had omitted to attribute his depression to his cousin's departure, still it must surely be owing to that, and so, perhaps, there was still some hope for her, that he might some day care for her again, as he had once cared for her, if Kathleen would but be patient, and do nothing rash. "And surely she will never be so foolish," thought Sybil to herself, and then she settled in her own mind that Sandy would yet one day, marry his cousin. In which case, poor Norah Murphy!

CHAPTER VII.

THE COTTAGE DESERTED.

When Kathleen O'Grady appeared on the deck of the steamer that runs between Dublin and Holyhead, few of her fellow-passengers would have believed that they saw before them a young lady whose heart was broken. They saw a girl as beautiful as any they had ever set eyes upon before, dressed in the height of the fashion, and attended upon by a French maid, who seemed to be upon the best of terms with her young mistress, and talked and laughed at her lively answers, as any equal might have, till one or two young guardsmen, just going on leave, and who only at the very

last moment condescended to take their places in the steamer, at once recognized Miss O'Grady, and formed a circle round her. Kathleen was quite equal to the occasion, she entertained them all alike, throwing them into fits of laughter by her account of her stay at Faversham, describing it as quite in the wilds of Ireland, and declaring she should require at least a week in town, before she should feel at all civilised again.

"Faversham and Killowen are running a dead heat for the medal that is to be given to the best little boy among the landowners, are not they, Miss O'Grady?" asked Captain Waldegrave, a tall dark man with an uncommon length of limb, and generally foreign air, that was only carried out by the elaborate rolling of his R's.

"I am afraid my cousin will come in a bad second, if there is any race between the two," laughed Kathleen. "I shall

certainly make my book on Lord Faversham, and I advise you to do the same."

She talked as if she had not a care in life beyond captivating these men, who were glad enough to wile away their time with a flirtation, and as if that also came easily to her. Nevertheless, she had quarrelled with two of them before she parted from them, and even Georgie Longley, who only took leave of her at Euston Square, having there given her over into the charge of the footman, who came to assist the French maid in the care of her boxes, even Georgie Longley said to himself, as he singled out a tidy looking hansom, "Why, hang it! she is more skittish than ever. Never knew any one put on the steam as she does—wonder when she'll go smash—she must some day. Blessed if I'd take shares in her;" for Georgie Longley was the son of a successful stockbroker, and though he winced not a

little when any allusion was made to the origin of the money, which he parted with so freely, he talked shop pretty often.

Kathleen O'Grady appeared still bright and blooming, as she returned her mother's kiss of greeting, but a tired look came over her as Lady Killowen said in her usual short tones, "Well, I hope you have enjoyed yourself. It has been dull enough for me, I know, while you have been away."

"Why, mother, we were booked for ever so many things."

"I daresay we were, but of course I sent excuses. I was not going to a lot of balls by myself. No, I have been literally nowhere since you went away, except to the park, of course, and to the Zoo on Sundays. Well, how is Sybil? Not much altered, I suppose?"

"No, very little; just what one would

expect, makes Faversham a perfect wife, and fancies she is desperately fond of him."

"And Sandy? What message does he send me?"

"He said he hoped you were quite well," said Kathleen, tossing off her bonnet as she spoke, and beginning to investigate into the invitations stuck into the looking-glass.

"Oh, is that all?" said Lady Killowen, with a murmur of dissatisfaction. "Well, have you two made it up?"

"Made it up? Yes, we are very good friends—cousins, I mean—hardly friends."

"Oh!" said Lady Killowen, again. "Only he can't forgive me, I suppose, because you treated him badly years ago. That is always the way your lovers love you, and don't care about me, but the men you quarrel with think it is all my fault."

"Well, mother, I can't help it, I am sure. You know I don't tell them so."

"I am sure I don't know what you tell them—a lot of nonsense, I should think. But is Sandy much changed?"

"Yes; he is a great deal changed. He is a man now."

"Gone off?"

"He is grown rather too broad now, he always was inclined that way, poor dear; but as to being improved or not, I can't say that I consider him so, for I never thought that possible. He has always been perfect to me."

"Humph!" said Lady Killowen; then after a pause, "but you are not perfect to him any longer. I suppose you never said anything to him about me?"

"Yes, mother, I did what I could for you. I would have said more, only I saw Sandy was determined to take everything I said *à tort*. I wish you could see him yourself; you would soon make it up then, I am sure."

"Of course I should. I never was so much given to quarrelling with people as you are. Well, now you are tired I daresay, you had better go upstairs and take your things off, and then I ordered them to have something ready for you to eat directly you arrived."

"Oh, I don't want anything to eat."

"Nonsense, Kathleen, do what I tell you directly. You must have a glass of wine, if you have nothing else.

Then when Kathleen had had something to eat, Lady Killowen began to question her again.

"I tell you, mother," said Kathleen, impatiently, "that Sandy is still as angry with you as ever, if not angrier. He never asked after you, and I believe he would never have mentioned you at all, if I had not."

"Pleasant."

"Well, I should think you would rather

hear that than that he was just indifferent; and of course you know he cannot be very friendly, or he would have come to see us long ago."

"Yes—yes," said Lady Killowen, "that is what you think, I daresay, but you and Sandy are the only two people I have ever cared for, and you are one of you as ungrateful as the other."

"Well, mother, I don't know what I am to be so grateful for at this moment. I am sure if I did, I'd——"

"Oh, I don't want any gratitude. Only it is a little hard to have Sandy, whom I have loved as my own son, come home from Australia after five years, and not to see him, and all because you chose to say you would marry that dreadful Mr. Simpson years ago. I am sure that was not my fault, any more than it was my fault that he got his neck broke, though I wish he had not, for then we should

have had some money, and money is not so easy to do without as gratitude. Well, I suppose Mr. Beauclerc was too wise to offer in the end."

"Oh, don't, mother, don't," cried Kathleen, turning very pale now with the tears brimming over her large blue eyes. "He is dying, they say, and I suppose it is I that have killed him."

"Not the first man either," muttered Lady Killowen; "but what is this one dying of?"

"I am sure I don't know. What do such men die of?"

"Delirium tremens, some of them."

"Oh, don't be horrid, mother."

"Well, they do, a great many of them, just like Mr. Beauclerc. I dare say he is, if you really knew, only you are so vain, you think it is all for love of you."

"Very well—go on—joke about it, if you

like," said Kathleen, and she set her teeth, and looked at her mother with an expression Lady Killowen had learnt to know well of late; but which very few other people had ever seen on that beautiful face.

Lady Killowen saw she had gone too far. "Oh, well! let us say it is of a broken heart. That sounds well at all events. How is Lord Faversham? is he getting any stronger?"

But Kathleen preserved a sullen silence, and nothing her mother could say to her, could induce her to open her lips, till at last some visitors were announced, then Kathleen flung down the book she was reading, and, with an exclamation of disgust, left the room.

"Yes; it is a nice home," she said, bitterly to herself. "A nice home, and a nice life I am leading. Sandy is right to keep away from us, and to take to the Murphy lot, or to any one. But mother had better take care, or she will make me des-

perate one of these days. If I knew the wretch bad enough, I'd marry him to-morrow, just to show them all that I am not to be trampled on for ever, or treated as if I were the dust under his feet, as Sandy treats me. It would be cutting my own throat, certainly; but I could not well be more miserable than I am. Oh! how I loathe and despise myself, and then to think how people are taken in by me! To think that Cosmo Beauclerc fancied I could make him happy, and Killowen thinks so too, and that wretched little Georgie Longley would 'marry' me 'to-morrow, and take me right away,' as he is always singing, if I would only have him. A nice wife I shall make to whoever gets me. Yes; I can't say I envy my future husband; but, anyhow, he will be better off than I am, for divorces may be had cheap now, and I can never divorce myself. I wonder if that is what I shall come to, though I'd give a

good deal to know how it will all end—to turn to the end of the third volume, and read the last chapter, for the story interests me rather, though it is dreary reading—very dreary."

Then there was a knock at the door, and the footman's voice saying, "Lord Killowen is in the drawing-room, her ladyship told me to say so."

"Oh, say that I am tired with my journey, and lying down," Kathleen replied at once from her position by the window, continuing to stand there, and look out upon the dreary prospect, such as even the most fashionable London houses often command—a small courtyard with melancholy windows staring blankly into it.

"The idea of Killowen's coming worrying me the first day of my coming back," she went on to herself. "It is too bad. He gave me a month, and I won't take off a day

of it, though I don't mean to have him, God knows. The idea of being tied for life to such a stick, why a week of him would be enough to drive any one mad. But it is as well to have him for a *pis-aller*, in case nothing else turns up, and how awfully pleased mother would be! But I don't mean to give her that pleasure. No; if I am to sell myself to the highest bidder, it will be to something better than an Irish Viscount, I hope."

Then Kathleen sat down and wrote off a very pretty little note to Lady Faversham, informing her of her safe arrival, and expressing, very sweetly, all the pleasure with which she looked back on those *peaceful happy* days she had spent at Faversham—all with a great deal of underlining, and many of those double "verys" with which young ladies are apt to emphasize their sentiments.

And now let us go back for a little to Faversham, from which so much of the

pleasantness seemed to have departed with Kathleen herself. There was not much going on there. In truth it was very dull, and a croquet party, ending in a dance at the Murphy's, Sandy found duller still. Norah Murphy was beginning to be afraid that she had fallen in love with Sandy Beaumont. Her cousin had laughingly teased her about him one day, as young ladies will laughingly teaze one another sometimes, and she shrank away from him during that afternoon, and did not dare even once to look up at him; when at last he succeeded in securing her as his partner for a *valse*. Sandy decided that day that she was really stupid in her shyness, and that he must have been mistaken, she could not possibly care for him even the least bit in the world. Well, she would have made a very dear little wife, and he had begun to look upon her as in a manner his own; but he knew he did not really love her, so he

would not roughly seize this fruit, since it seemed in nowise inclined to drop into his mouth. He would leave it for some other man, who, with a better love, might put in a better claim for it. It gave him a little pain thus to relinquish the dream of having Norah Murphy for his wife; but not so much as it would have a day or two earlier, for in these last few days everything had become very dull at the Cottage, and little Norah seemed to have grown dull also.

It was just at this time that Sandy received two letters by the morning's post, which appeared to afford him so much satisfaction, and made him so redden with pleasure, that Lady Faversham could not help saying, "I wish I ever got such good news, as you seem to have Mr. Beaumont; you are really making me quite jealous."

"Out with it, Beaumont, old man," cried Lord Faversham. "You hardly look as if

they were from your lady-love. Besides, two —that could hardly be. Have you heard that big property of yours has been swallowed up by the sea?" For Sandy's oppression by his new wealth was a favourite subject of banter with the young Earl.

They were at breakfast, in the middle of which meal the post always arrived at Faversham—a most undesirable arrangement, as Kathleen had pronounced it, but one which was greatly approved of by Lady Faversham, who kept up no particularly private correspondence, and was perfectly willing that all the world should see the outsides of her letters at the least. Sandy Beaumont seemed equally indifferent as to the contents; for, as he now laid down his letters, and proceeded to help himself to some cold fowl and ham upon the sideboard, he replied laughingly—

"No, it is no such good news as that; but I have just heard from two of my old

brother officers, De Lancey—you know him, Faversham, the best fellow that ever breathed—and Jumper, a real good fellow, too, though not particularly troubled with brains. He was always the rich man in the regiment, and had no end of horses. You may remember him in that way; and it seems, while the 168th were quartered at Portsmouth, he got bitten with a yachting mania; and now he and De Lancey are planning a trip to Norway for some salmon-fishing, and want me to join them, as they say they can't stand the bore of a month or two *tête-à-tête*."

"Capital fun it would be! Just the very thing you would like, I should say," exclaimed Lord Faversham.

"Yes, I should like it very much; but they have got their leave, and want to start at once."

"Well, why not?"

"I am afraid Lady Faversham will think me rude if I run away in that way," said Sandy, smiling, and looking round at her.

"Oh, no," said Sybil; "pray don't think of that; only Faversham and I shall both consider you owe us another visit later on, if you go away now. This has been such a short visit, that I think we must hold you bound to come and give us an account of your salmon-fishing, when you return."

"That I will, gladly. But really I don't know anything I should like better than this trip—especially with De Lancey. Did you ever know him, Lady Faversham? I am sure you would have liked him. Many is the scrape he has helped me out of. I don't know any man I owe more to."

"That is the way Faversham always speaks of him too. I know him very little myself, but he is a great friend of my mother-in-law."

"Yes," said Sandy, "I remember—but he is every one's friend that knows him. I never heard any one speak a bad word of the Major all the time I served under him, and that is a wonderful thing to say of any man."

"I say, Beaumont, since he carries you off in this unceremonious fashion, I think you ought to bring him back with you, when you next come to us. Try if you can manage it, will you? But when are you to be off now?"

"Well, to-morrow, I suppose," said Sandy, gaily.

Sybil was astonished at the change in him. He seemed to have grown young once more at the thought of thus again seeing two of his old messmates. He made little jokes quite in his old, boyish style, as he patted Rover on the head, and talked to him of what rare larks they would have.

"For there is an invitation for you too,

old boy. So like Jumper—the most considerate fellow possible, Lady Faversham, though you would never think so to look at him; but he always recollects little things of that kind. There, that is old Jumper all over." And he showed her Captain Jumper's letter, at the end of which, in a large, schoolboy hand, was scrawled nearly all over the otherwise blank page: "P.S. Tell Rover he is expected. Mind, we'll have nothing to say to his master, unless the dog comes too."

"It will do Beaumont all the good in the world," said Lord Faversham to his wife. "I never saw a fellow more down in the mouth than he has been these last few days, and, indeed, ever since he came home from Australia. I hope, now, he will be quite his old cheery self again, after a little, with De Lancey in Norway."

But though Sandy was so excited out

of himself by the idea of this projected salmon-fishing, he did not forget his promise to Lady Faversham; and he had a long, serious talk with Cosmo Beauclerc, the chief result of which conversation seemed to be, that Cosmo promised he would write and ask his mother to meet him in Dublin, as he was too ill for the long journey home, but hoped to be well enough to be moved there in the course of the next few days.

"I dare say she won't come," he said, "and I know I don't deserve that she should, for I have been a bad son, and a precious bad fellow all along. I know I have, so it is no use telling me so."

Not that Sandy was telling him so; quite the contrary. One other effect this conversation had upon Cosmo, and that was that it left him rather tearful, and completely exhausted, and, for about the first time in his life, disinclined to talk—as Lady Faversham

found, to her great surprise, when she went to him soon afterwards.

"You were not hard upon him, I hope," she asked anxiously, when she next saw Sandy.

"Hard upon him! What do you take me for, Lady Faversham? Am I so righteous that I can afford to be hard upon any one? But the poor little fellow had never realized he was dying—he says he had heard 'wolf' cried so often—and now I think he believes it, and that belief is pretty sure to bring about its own accomplishment, and that is all the good I have done! I shall always feel as if I had killed him."

"Oh, no; you have only done what every one else is doing. Every one has told him he is dying."

"The only difference is, he has believed me. Not that I ever told him so, he only saw that I believed it myself. He is writing

for his mother to join him in Dublin, and if she is anything of a good woman, she will do him more good than any one else can, if not ——"

"Do you think she will come?" asked Sybil.

"Well, I don't know anything of her," said Sandy, looking perplexed, "but I took that for granted. Surely any mother would?"

"Perhaps, Major Beauclerc might not let her. I believe he is very angry with his son."

"I don't think a woman ought to obey her husband in a case of that kind," said Sandy, sternly.

Lady Faversham wondered at him a little, he seemed so much pained, whenever he was accused of being hard, and yet she could not help thinking there was a good deal of hardness about him now at times.

"I think I must warn your wife of this. I don't suppose it would ever occur to Miss Murphy that she was expected to be disobedient."

"I shall never have a wife," said Sandy, shortly. "I was a fool about Miss Murphy the other day, she has never cared a rap for me, she would hardly speak to me yesterday, and I don't suppose she will ever think of me again, when she hears I have gone away."

As to Lady Faversham, she did not suppose this at all, but it did not enter into her schemes that Sandy should marry Norah Murphy, so she held her peace, and next day Sandy went away, and two days after that the Favershams themselves took care of Cosmo Beauclerc on his way to Dublin, and then went on to stay for a little at another of Lord Faversham's properties in the North of Ireland; for Lord Faversham had not yet

got over his fatigue and the subsequent shock of the idea of Cosmo Beauclerc's approaching death, and was greatly in want of change. Indeed, had it not been for him, it would have gone to Lady Faversham's heart to leave her late patient alone in Dublin, but her husband's health was the first consideration with her, and she saw, that being with Cosmo Beauclerc was bad for him, so she persuaded her husband, and in so doing, persuaded herself, that Mrs. Beauclerc would arrive, in all probability next day to nurse her son, and then having seen Cosmo safely into an hotel at Dublin, they went on their way and left him.

CHAPTER VIII.

STARTLING NEWS.

It was splendid weather for yachting that year, and though the salmon fisheries are so much taken up, that it is difficult to obtain good fishing even in Norway, unless arranged long beforehand, not one whit the less did the trio in the pretty yawl-rigged cutter "Nevella" enjoy themselves. It was just like old times to Sandy to find himself thus thrown together with two of his old brother officers, and perhaps Jumper, who was not over much troubled with brains, did even more to recall these old times than Major De Lancey, for while the latter would discuss whatever subject came uppermost, the former

could talk of nothing but Brown in the —th, and Smith in the something else, and poor Jones of ours, who could not afford to buy his steps, and thus seemed likely to remain a subaltern for ever. This, with a little intermixture of racing and hunting was the staple of Captain Jumper's conversation, and sometimes Sandy would shut his eyes and listen to the other droning on, "how the little bay mare did all she knew, but she was not equal to the pace, and Jack Davey did nothing to lift her along;" or how "the big black brute nearly pulled my arms off, by Jove, but I just gave her her head at first, and then when she thought she was having it all her own way I jerked her head back a bit, and after that she went as quiet as a lamb;" and with his eyes shut listening to honest Jumper talk, Sandy would hardly believe he was not still in the old much-loved regiment, a pennyless subaltern to boot, loving his cousin Kathleen

with all his heart, and not bearing a grudge against any one in the world, nor fancying any one could possibly bear a grudge against him. Well, those times were long ago, but it was pleasant to recall them now, and when he grew tired of Jumper's conversation, and Jumper, though the best fellow possible, was not quite the liveliest of companions, there was always Major De Lancey to fall back upon, who was even more closely connected with those old times, which Sandy still looked back to so fondly, and who was besides, the man of all men, whom Sandy most respected, and from whom he had received the most kindness.

Those were halcyon days, those days in Norway; there was not a cloud to ruffle them, and the only drawback to them was that the other two men's leave would not last for ever, and that they must consequently soon be a thing of the past. It was

on this drawback, this unfortunately transitory nature of all earthly enjoyments, that Sandy was lazily moralising, while smoking a comfortable pipe after a long day's fishing, when their factotum—steward, valet, and butler in one—appeared with a bundle of letters in his hand just sent on to them from the nearest town. Their letters arrived irregularly, and generally at very long intervals; but, instead of hailing their entrance with joy, the three men set to work to abuse them for having come at all; and having summarily ordered the servant to deposit them on the table, and not to think of apportioning his own to each member of the party, under pain of their most serious displeasure, Jumper wisely suggested that they should throw them into the fire.

"They'll be sure to want answers some of them, the little rascals," he said, "and then that'll be another bother, after we have

got through the first bother of reading them. We are quite glad our friends are all well enough to write to us; and as to our duns, the less we hear about them the better. Beaumont, you're nearest, just pitch the whole lot into the fire—won't you?"

"Not at all a bad idea of your's that, Jumper," replied Sandy, lazily. "I am sure I don't care if I never see a letter again, there is nobody I wish to hear from; but I can't reach them without moving, so do you just touch up the bell, it is under your nose, and then we'll tell your servant to pitch them into the fire for us. We may as well do the thing comfortably whilst we are about it."

"No, no, I protest," cried Major De Lancey; "I am not so abundantly provided with this world's filthy lucre but that it would be a satisfaction to hear somebody had bequeathed to me their fortune. Then, with an assumed seriousness, he got up. "Gentle-

men, I am ashamed of you; such laziness would be a disgrace to any profession. Mr. Beaumont, your letters, sir. Captain Jumper, your mind may be relieved—there is only one for you."

"From a dun? I told you so!" exclaimed the latter. "I knew the big ugly writing without even looking at it. What a hurry the fellow is in, to be sure."

Meanwhile, Sandy turned over his letters without making up his mind to opening any of them, till, seeing one was from Lady Faversham, he at once broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Beaumont,—

"I am perfectly miserable. ['Hollo!' cried Sandy, straightening himself in his chair, and becoming all attention on the instant.] I do not know what to do; indeed I know I can do nothing, but still I think

perhaps you might, and you really must try. However angry you may be with your cousin, I cannot believe you will not interpose now to save her from such awful misery as she is preparing for herself. I have only just heard from her, and I write at once, in order that as little time as possible may be lost, for she writes so mysteriously as to give me no idea how soon it may be too late to interfere. I take for granted you have not heard of it already, or I think you must have done something to stop it, as I am sure you could, and you alone; but if you have heard from her already, you must forgive my telling you an old story, for I cannot bear the idea that my darling Kathleen, the greatest friend I have ever had, should throw herself away upon such a wretch as the Count Manfredi."

"Good God!" cried Sandy, and crumpled up the letter in his hand, and took a turn about the room.

"Bad news, Beaumont?" asked Major De Lancey.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Sandy, and sat down again, and smoothed out the letter, and read on:—"I do not know if you used to think of him as I did, but I think you must agree with me that he is the last man in the world your cousin ought to marry. Indeed, I think he is the last man in the world any woman ought to marry; but Kathleen tells me it is all settled, and the wedding to be very soon. I had not heard from her for a long time, though she is generally such a good correspondent; and now I have only just read her letter, and am so horrified, I hardly know how to express myself, but I cannot bear to miss a single post. I must close my letter now, or it will be too late. You will do *all* you can, will you not? I am sure you can stop this miserable mockery—marriage I cannot call

it—if only you are not too late. For God's sake, do not delay about it: nothing worse could happen to Kathleen; and recollect she is your cousin after all, and if she was unkind to you long ago, no one could have repented it more bitterly than she has.

"'Forgive me if I have written too strongly, and

"Believe me,

"Very truly yours,

"SYBIL FAVERSHAM."

"I must start for England at once," said Sandy, after he had finished reading this letter.

"What is it, old fellow? Can I be of any use to you, Beaumont," said Major De Lancey, getting up and laying his hand upon his shoulder.

"No, thank you, De Lancey," and Sandy turned round and grasped the other's hand

warmly. "Thank you all the same, but none can be of any use but myself, and no one can help me. The only question is how to get quickest to England." He looked very pale as he spoke, and there was again the set look about his mouth, which he had quite lost during his yachting trip.

"Of course the 'Nevella' is at your service, Beaumont, only the wind is dead against her," said Captain Jumper. "I wish you had thrown those letters into the fire, as I asked you to: no good ever comes of them, they are much better burnt."

"No, thank heaven, I did not burn this one," said Sandy; and then he turned to the rest of his correspondence, and looked through it with redoubled interest, but there was no note from Kathleen. She had asked Sandy to write to her one of his nice old letters, and he had never done so; and thus he had never heard from her, nor even

of her, since he had parted from her at Faversham, till now when this terrible news had come. He wished he had written now, he wished to heaven he had; but regrets were useless now, and the only thing was to get to England as quickly as possible. The other two men wished to accompany him, but Sandy would not hear of cutting short their trip in this way; and so, after a little consultation, it was settled that they should go across in the "Nevella," and try to catch the London steamer as it passed next morning; and if they failed in that, which God forbid, then they would push on to England as best they could, fair wind or foul; but if they succeeded, then Sandy should go on his way alone, and the other two should return in the "Nevella," and finish their fishing. Then there was a hurried packing, and a hurried giving of orders, and before another hour was over they were all on board the "Nevella,"

and the cutter was making her way heavily against a strong head-wind, to try and catch the London steamer and deposit Sandy Beaumont on board.

Lady Faversham had been very uneasy about Kathleen for some time before hearing of her engagement. After that first little note, written just on arriving in London, she had heard no more of her, though she had herself written twice to inquire if anything had gone wrong. At last, one day, she had seen the familiar writing on the usual pretty perfumed paper.

"DEAREST SYBIL," Kathleen wrote, "I could not bear to write to you before; you will understand why, when you know all. Mother and I have broken with each other at last, and had it not been for poor Tomtom, as I always used to call my uncle when a child, I suppose I should have fled at once to the

protection of my future husband. Now I am remaining with my uncle till the wedding, which is to be very soon, for I have met my Destiny again, Sybil. As soon as I saw him I yielded at once. I could not resist him, when I was young and innocent, at Rome: was it likely I should now, after long years of self-indulgence and blind following out of every impulse? You understand that I am to marry the Count Manfredi? Why I shrink from telling you so I do not know. I know there will come one long letter of reproaches and entreaties from you, and then I suppose our friendship of many years will be at an end, for Lady Faversham is hardly likely to have much in common with the Count Manfredi's wife. Well, your friendship has been very dear to me, and those last few days at Faversham shine out like a bright spot in all my life of misery: for that is what my life is, and has been for years. I may be

miserable as Antonio's wife—I dare say I shall be—but I cannot be more utterly wretched than I have been as Kathleen O'Grady. You may spare your entreaties, dear Sybil, they will be useless. I should have married Antonio long ago, if he had asked me; I shall marry him now. He has now told me that he was really married when we last met, and his wife died about four years ago. She was an Englishwoman, too, but she left him soon after her marriage, with Sandy Beaumont's father. He seems to have felt it very much. Curious that the father should have caused the misery of his life, and the son the misery of mine! If Sandy had only spoken one kind word to me at Faversham, I would not take this step; but he does not care what I do now. Nobody cares, so why should I? If I had had more friends like you, it might have been different; but now, dearest, forget me and be

happy. Only, if ever you are in trouble, then remember that, whether I sign myself Manfredi, or however it may be,

"I am yours always,

"KATHLEEN."

This was the letter that had prompted Lady Faversham's desperate appeal to Mr. Beaumont; she wished she could have telegraphed, she wished she could have gone herself. At that time she felt as if she would have died readily to save her friend from the disgrace and misery that she was bringing upon herself, but she knew that she was powerless. What could she say to Kathleen when her mother's entreaties had failed? How could she, who was only a simple Englishwoman, contend with this man, whom Kathleen wrote of as her Destiny? Still she did what she could—she wrote to Sandy Beaumont, imploring him to hurry home,

and bring his influence to bear; and then she wrote to Kathleen herself, describing in the most forcible terms at her command, the wretched lot she was voluntarily selecting for herself, but Kathleen wrote back that there was nothing voluntary in the matter. "I never was a free agent where the Count was concerned," she said. "People used to talk of the evil eye, and now they talk of magnetic influence; well the Count has magnetic influence over me, the Count has the evil eye. I do not love him; sometimes I think I almost hate him, but he says I am to marry him, and what use would it be for me to say no? Besides, I am powerless to say so. I daresay I may be as wretched as you fancy, but I have no choice in the matter. Anyhow, my fate will soon be decided, and then '*qui vivra, verra.*' Thank Lord Faversham very much for me, but I do not need any help, nor anything, still I feel the kindness of

his offer. He is a good man, Sybil, but a wife like you would make any man good. As for me, I must marry Antonio."

Then, as a last resource, Sybil wrote to Lady Killowen, telling her how she had always been grateful for her kindness both during her father's and mother's lifetime, and afterwards, when she had been a forlorn orphan at Ryde, almost a foreigner in her own country, and without a friend in the world, and that she knew she could never return this kindness; but she thought the least she could do to show she had not forgotten it was to entreat Lady Killowen to use every means in her power to avert Kathleen's marriage.

"I know you love her better than any one else," wrote Lady Faversham, "and I know it must be making you utterly wretched, but you used to shrink sometimes from exerting your authority over Kathleen. Pray, pray,

dear Lady Killowen, do not shrink now. Even if Kathleen were never to forgive your interference, surely that would be better than that she should marry the Count Manfredi. No wonder his first wife ran away from him; the only wonder to my mind is how any woman could bring herself to marry him. Mr. Beauclerc seemed to say that he had poisoned that wretched woman, who left her husband for his sake when we were at Ryde. I do not know how that may be, but poisoning is the least evil I fear for Kathleen. I know he is handsome and clever, and that many people would call him fascinating, but his fascination is like that of some deadly serpent, or like the Upas tree, alluring to the passer-by, but fatal to all those who venture beneath its branches. Oh, dear Lady Killowen, do everything you can to prevent Kathleen's marrying such a man. It must not, cannot come to pass. If I were you, I

would kneel to her, though she were ten times my daughter, till she promised me it should not. I think I would kill her first. I shall pray night and day, till I hear from you, that she has yielded, and promised never to see that dreadful man again."

It was in such terms as these that the ordinarily quiet Lady Faversham wrote of the proposed marriage of her friend, but then Lady Faversham had been born and bred abroad, and there was a good deal of Southern passion in her blood, which broke forth occasionally, notwithstanding that in everyday life she wore the composed appearance of an Englishwoman.

Lady Killowen's answer was brief, but it went to the heart of Sybil, who knew well the warmth of the nature that was concealed under an ordinarily worldly, almost cynical manner:—

"DEAR SYBIL,

"I have no power over Kathleen, and for me to ask her not to marry the Count would make it a dead certainty. Her uncle thinks she is in love with him, and that I am just a worldly mother, who dislike her marrying a man without money, so he sides with her. To the best of my belief the Count has money, or I cannot fancy Kathleen would have him; but I don't *believe* she will yet. If she does, I cannot kill her, but she will kill me, and she knows it perfectly. How are your two children? I am sorry to hear Lord Faversham is not well; you will have to go abroad this year, I expect. Why don't you give the south of France a trial? Madeira must, I am sure, be weakening, though it has suited you both so well up to this time.

"Yours affectionately,

"K. S. KILLOWEN."

Then Lady Faversham knew that there was nothing more she could do, and she waited anxiously for Sandy. Perhaps he might not come! perhaps he might be too late! perhaps even his entreaties would prove powerless! But something whispered to her that he would prevail. She did not believe in the evil eye, nor much in magnetic influence, but she believed greatly in love, and Lady Faversham knew that Kathleen was in love with Sandy. It was impossible she could marry the Count.

All this time Sandy had far greater cause for uneasiness than Lady Faversham. Sandy knew nothing of Kathleen's love for himself, he only remembered that years before Kathleen had a hundred times annoyed him by her undisguised preference of the Count Manfredi. Why the Count had not been equally fascinated by her, and married her, had always puzzled him; but he had long

been convinced that the Italian's intense hatred of himself was, in some way or other, at the bottom of this otherwise inexplicable mystery. Sandy Beaumont had never known much of his father, and he was acquainted with none of the details of the story; but when he had last come in contact with the Count Manfredi, he had learnt that his father had at least been the companion of the Italian's young English wife in her flight from her husband. He had learnt also that all the unhappy man's love for his wife, which must at one time have been both deep and passionate, had given place to an unreasoning hatred of the man whom he very naturally looked upon as the cause of that flight, and that owing to that man's death, the Count had transferred this hatred to his son Sandy, himself. Whether or no it was owing to the Count's bad treatment of her that Kathleen O'Grady had long ago ac-

cepted Mr. Simpson, thus going near to break her cousin's heart, Sandy had never been able to make sure, but he knew that at the least the Count Manfredi had been desirous that it should be thought to be his doing. Mr. Simpson had died, and so the engagement had come to nothing, but recollecting the Count's conduct at the time, the manner in which he had insulted Kathleen, by paying her the most marked attentions up to the very moment of running away with another man's wife, and the openness of his expression of hatred towards himself, Sandy felt as if there were no villany this foreigner might not be guilty of, in order to work misery for Kathleen, and through her for himself. The moments till he could arrive in England seemed like years to him. He knew that Count Manfredi could not have loved Kathleen, while apparently paying his court to her years before, or he could never have

treated her as he had. Sandy did not in his heart believe he loved her now; but Kathleen had been deceived then, might she not again be deceived now? And if so, the Count was very clever; what might he not do towards binding her to marry himself?

As he paced the deck in the calm, peaceful moonlight, Sandy shivered at the thought. The silvery light traced a long tremulous path of glory on the waters, but it only reminded Sandy of other moonlight evenings in the Isle of Wight, where Kathleen had been infatuated, and the charmer had charmed only too successfully. Was he charming now again? There was madness in the thought.

CHAPTER IX.

A REVELATION.

It was a sultry September morning on which Sandy Beaumont knocked at the door of the house his aunt, Lady Killowen, had taken for the season in town; the sun streamed down upon the doorstep, and made him move uneasily, as he waited there till the servant appeared, and eyed him suspiciously.

"Lady Killowen at home?"

"Her Ladyship can't see any one, sir."

"Take my card up," said Sandy, quietly, and stepped within the passage-door, finding for a moment coolness there, in comparison with the devouring sweltering heat outside.

"Is Miss O'Grady at home?" he asked then, as the man was about to leave him.

"Miss O'Grady's been gone some time, sir," replied the servant, and went upstairs, leaving Sandy to wonder whether he had come too late, whether his cousin were already married, and he might not as well go back to Norway, or anywhere, the further the better. England certainly would not be endurable with Kathleen married to the Count Manfredi; but that was an idea not even to be contemplated for a moment. Good Lord, how hot it was!

"Will you come up, sir?" said the servant, coming downstairs again, and still speaking in that low depressed tone that always betokens something has gone wrong in the household. Then Sandy went upstairs.

Lady Killowen was sitting in an arm-chair by the open window, working away at

her lacework, as her nephew had seen her a hundred times before. He could hardly believe that it was five years since he had seen her; surely when he had gone away he had left her working that same bit of lace; had she been in an enchanted dream all these years, and only now awoken and gone on with it again? Nothing seemed changed about her; certainly the lacework was the same. But she laid it down now, and rose to receive her nephew, greeting him as if they had met each other yesterday, and the parting of years had been indeed only a dream.

"Have you seen Kathleen?" she asked at once, without wasting any time in welcoming her nephew—she had been very fond of him always, and treated him just as if he had been her son, but her daughter was really her daughter, and infinitely more precious.

"No; where is she? I expected to find her here."

"She has quarrelled with me—will not even see me now; so she is staying with her uncle, Tom O'Grady, till she marries the Count."

"She must never marry him," said Sandy quickly.

"Why did not you marry her yourself? I thought you would have arranged it all at Faversham. I never expected to see her come back without you, Sandy."

"How should I marry her? She does not care for me."

"Does not she?" said Lady Killowen, shortly, going on with her work again.

Sandy paused. "I want to see her to speak to her about this—this——. Do you think it will do any good? Is it at all necessary? She cannot really intend to marry him!"

"She says she does."

"And you believe she really means it? She must be mad; but do you think my going to her will be of any use?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I can but try," said Sandy, getting up to go. "I suppose my uncle is at his old address?"

"Why don't you ask her to marry yourself?" said Lady Killowen, looking up from her work now. "Or was that only a passing fancy?"

"No, it was no passing fancy," replied Sandy in an altered voice, looking away from his aunt, but standing quite still beside her now.

"Well, then, ask her to marry you instead of the Count. That would be of some use;" and again Lady Killowen went on with her work.

Sandy looked at his aunt, and the blind-

ing tears filled his eyes. "I have asked her before now not to marry a man. With my whole heart I have asked it, and been refused, though heaven interposed and sent the wretched creature to his death. But now, God knows, I would rather she had married Mr. Simpson than that she should marry the Count Manfredi, and on the chance that it may do some good, I will beg her with all the entreaties in my power not to marry the Count, and I will risk the chance of being refused again, but I will not risk being refused myself. No, that I could not stand—not from Kathleen."

"There would be no risk."

"What do you mean, aunt? You do not mean that you think she loves me?" and Sandy bent down over his aunt and gazed into her face as if to read her inmost thoughts.

But Lady Killowen did not seem to care

to have her inmost thoughts read in this way, and she bent lower over her work. "Don't you know it?" she said, in her short, abrupt manner.

"No. How should I? Aunt, you are mistaken; Kathleen does not care for me—she does not." He spoke almost imploringly, as if supplicating her to tell him that he was right, and that she had only been trifling with him, but Lady Killowen had not been trifling with him.

"Then it was not you that she nearly cried her eyes out for when you went to Australia? It was because of Mr. Simpson's death, I suppose? They happened one after the other, and it is natural enough I should have confused them," and Lady Killowen glanced up at her nephew a cool contemptuous glance, and then went on with her work as if she were toiling for her livelihood, and the lace were of the highest importance

to her, and her daughter's marriage nothing in comparison.

"Did she—was she sorry when I went away?" asked Sandy, in a voice that trembled a little, though he strove hard to make it sound composed.

"She looked much the same to other people, I daresay?" said Lady Killowen in her usual cold hard tones, "but I used to hear her crying through the night. For many nights she did not even go to bed, I believe, but spent whole hours walking about her room, and trying to read, or do anything, and sobbing. Oh, no, of course, she was not sorry, for I was sorry—I always was fond of you, Sandy, always—and I could have slept well enough, had it not been for Kathleen. But, because she was too proud to show the world how much she felt—far too proud to tell the world so—you think she felt nothing! Why do you think

she went to Faversham then? To see Sybil and her husband? Do you think a girl like Kathleen would leave London in the very middle of the season, just to see a friend, whom she might see as well at any other time of year? Whose picture is it she wears in that bracelet, that never leaves her night or day? Do you recollect that photograph you had taken for her, just before you went away, and left us all? You were going to get her a locket for it, but you went away, and she had that bracelet with a picture of her father in the clasp, but it is not her father's picture in it now. Did you never see it? Oh, but men never see such things, they notice nothing! Of course you never saw it, any more than you saw that she cared for you, and no one but you."

A dizziness came over Sandy. Did he not remember a bracelet, by playing with

which Kathleen had often worried him, whilst she had been at Faversham? It had annoyed him, he knew not why. Did he not remember Sophy Murphy spying it out with those bright glancing eyes of hers, and asking whose picture was contained in that clasp, which Kathleen was for ever unclasping? And did he not remember Kathleen's answer, "It is the photograph of the only man I ever really loved. It never leaves me night and day, and when I die, I mean to be buried in it?" He had never thought of that speech again, but somehow he thought of it now; he recollected he had been annoyed by what he considered his cousin's exaggerated mode of speech, and he recollected how little Norah Murphy, who had been sitting next to Kathleen, had glanced up at him with her tender blue eyes, and meeting his eye, had turned away her own and blushed. He had thought at

the time that she, like himself, disliked the manner of the speech; now he knew she must have seen the photograph. And it was the photograph of himself—the only man his cousin had ever really loved! Great God! he must go to her at once.

"I have been very blind, aunt," he said, very pale, and still with a sort of darkness over his eyes.

"Yes—yes," said Lady Killowen, rising hurriedly, and taking her nephew's hand in hers. "I knew you must care for her still, really, it was impossible you should not: for there is nobody like her, nobody. Though she has quarrelled with me, and treated me worse than any daughter ever treated her mother, I say still that, after having loved her, a man must be soft or worse to stoop to any one else. And you never were soft, Sandy!" she said. "But go to her. You are in a hurry at last, I see;

so go to her, but do not show her too much that you care for her, for Kathleen is a true woman, and will trample on you, if you do. Only show her she might possibly have you, and then, perhaps, she will choose you rather than the Count Manfredi; and when she has chosen you, come and tell me soon, for I—love—you—both;" and the hard voice of the woman of the world, as her acquaintance called her, faltered, and finally broke down, but only for a moment; then Lady Killowen looked up cold and stern again. "And if she does not choose you, do not come to tell me of it, do not ever come near me again; for, if Kathleen marries the Count, I never want to see any one any more."

On this Sandy stooped and kissed his aunt more lovingly than he had kissed any one for many a long day, for those kisses of Kathleen in the meanwhile had only been hollow mockeries, the touching of the lips,

and nothing more; then he said, "I will do my best, aunt. I can but do my best, and so saying, he left the room; and Lady Killowen sat down again, and took up her lace, and worked away at it, delicate cobweb, and still more delicate button-hole, and all the while she would have torn it into shreds, had she been a woman who gave way to her feelings. But that Lady Killowen never was; no, never since the day when she had been locked up in her room, and told she should not be let out, till she had consented to marry Lord Killowen. She was in love with his brother, and he with her; but what mattered that? She was only seventeen, an orphan, and penniless, and so she had married Lord Killowen; and though she had never pretended to love him, she had made him a fairly good wife, as wives go; but she had never given way to her feelings since that day, when

she had said through the closed door, "Yes, I will marry Lord Killowen," and had come down to the drawing-room, and there received her future lord's caresses. And the world called her hard, sometimes, indeed, heartless! Well, perhaps it was right, for she did not love her husband, neither had she not really loved Tom O'Grady, it had been but a girl's passing fancy for him; but there were two people she had really loved, and those two were her daughter and her nephew.

She would have been furious in the old days had any one suggested any idea of a marriage between them, for were they not both poor, and why should her daughter any more than herself be permitted to marry the man of her choice? But bitter had been the disappointment to Lady Killowen when Kathleen had returned from Faversham, and announced no engagement between herself and

her cousin! For was not Sandy rich now, and had he not always been the man of all men whom Lady Killowen would have chosen for a son-in-law, had he but been a little more gifted by fortune? She had been bitterly disappointed, and it had been difficult to her at first to believe that it had not been in some way Kathleen's fault that Sandy had not offered to her at Faversham, and so she had been hard and biting in the sarcasms which she had used towards her daughter, and then she had been a little arbitrary in the manner in which she had advocated her other nephew, Lord Killowen's suit, for he had barely waited the expiration of the month to sue for his answer, and having got it, had shown himself a great deal more discontented with it than any one would have expected from the cool tone of his offer, till at last one day Kathleen had flared up, and quarrelled with her mother, and Lady Killowen had gone out and left her

at home with her wrath and misery. That day it was so ordered that the Count Manfredi called. Kathleen had seen him many times since her return to town, but this was the first time she had seen him alone, and she was wrathful with her mother, and sore with Sandy's want of love, and overcome with an unreasoning hatred of her life, and the wily Italian saw it all. He seized his opportunity, and told her the history of his own life, some part of it at least, that part which Kathleen had repeated to Lady Faversham, when she wrote to her, only the Count told it at much greater length, and then he asked the glorious young beauty, who was still so unhappy, despite her youth and despite her beauty, if she dreaded to make her life yet more unhappy by joining it with his.

"I do not promise to you all the consideration of a husband, as does your English cousin," said the Count Manfredi, looking at

her with those evil eyes, which Kathleen had always declared herself powerless to resist. "I do not swear to you I love you more than ever woman was loved before, like some infatuated boy; but I say that there exists some sympathy between us thus to draw us together for the second time in our lives. I was not free the first time, and it was my destiny to resist that influence then; but say, will you resist it now? Or say, adorable Kathleen, say rather that you will be mine?"

And Kathleen answered nothing—absolutely nothing. What she might have answered none can ever know now, for the door opened, and in came Lady Killowen and her nephew, Kathleen's suitor, the present Lord Killowen, and in a few minutes Kathleen was standing up, clinging to the Count's arm, and defying her mother and her cousin; the Count looking at them the while with those

awful eyes of his, smiling his delicate smile. For they were playing his game for him far better than he could ever have played it for himself, and now Kathleen was in his power. But not so entirely as he thought; he thought she would give herself up to him, trust entirely to him, and go away with him at once; and in this he was mistaken. Kathleen told him she would write to him, and then bidding him farewell, with a most significant "*Au revoir*," loftily swept by her mother and her cousin without even deigning to glance at them, and going upstairs, and commanding her maid to pack up her things, everything of hers, sat down and wrote a note to her uncle, Tom O'Grady, asking him if he would give her the benefit of his protection till her approaching marriage with the Count Manfredi should take place, as after the manner in which her mother had but now treated her, she, intending to marry him, could not pos-

sibly condescend to remain under her roof even for another night.

It might be thought that the old love passages between Tom O'Grady and Lady Killowen would have rendered him averse to assist her daughter in her revolt against her authority, but he recollected how Lady Killowen had been forced into a marriage with his brother, and he did not believe she had been the happier for it, so he determined that what little he could do should go towards saving her daughter from sharing the same fate. She should not be sacrificed to the present Lord Killowen as her mother had been sacrificed to the late Viscount. She should marry the man she loved, if Tom O'Grady could bring it about. Was it his fault that he believed the Count Manfredi to be that man in whose favour he was to do all he could?

CHAPTER X.

KATHLEEN AND SANDY.

But meanwhile the man whom Kathleen really loved was making his way to her as fast as a London hansom could take him, through that steaming sweltering September morning. The passers by were wonderfully few and far between, even for the time of year, and the omnibuses were painted white, and their drivers wore white cloths twisted about their hats, while the poor horses made the best of their way with tongues lolling out to catch, if possible, some stray breaths of fresh air, and necks that looked distressingly shiny; but Sandy Beaumont saw nothing of this: he could not have said whether London was full

or empty, whether it was hot or cold, so entirely was he wrapt up in his own thoughts. He had been told that Kathleen loved him, the cousin whom he had loved during all his boyish years, and whom then, finding her, as he thought, unworthy of his love, he had hardened his heart against, and so doing had grown hard towards all the world.

And now he was told she loved him! Sandy had indeed spoken truly to Lady Faversham, when he told her few men had so much desired love, as he had. He had craved for love, as the thirsty man craves for water in the desert, and hitherto he had remained unsatisfied. He had fancied for a moment or two that Norah Murphy cared for him, and he had been ready at once to love her in return, out of sheer gratitude. Why, he would have loved any woman, who had a heart to give, and had given it away to him

first. And now, all on a sudden, he was told that Kathleen loved him; and he knew it. Directly he was told so, he knew it, though he had been blind before. He understood now what Lady Faversham had meant by saying, "You should marry some one like your cousin," and by many other such speeches, which had irritated him at the time, but which irritated him now no longer, for he understood that they had been spoken as much out of regard for Kathleen, as for himself.

Yes, of course, Lady Faversham and Kathleen were friends, and knew each other's secrets, and of course Lady Faversham knew that Kathleen loved him. A hundred little things came crowding back upon his memory now—little words and looks, that he had barely noticed at the time, but which he now seemed to have treasured up with utmost care, so vividly did they present

themselves before his mind. It was no time now to think whether Kathleen was worthy or not; she loved him. And for himself, had he not loved her always? Oh, he had told himself that he did not love her; but was it true? had she ever become indifferent to him? just one woman among the many women in the world. Sandy told himself she had not, that she had always been a peculiar person to him—the one woman in the world to him. Oh yes, he had always loved her, but he must not show his love too openly now; he could not bear to have it lightly treated even for a moment, as he thought Kathleen would be sure to treat it, if she once felt sure that it was hers. Besides, he knew Kathleen, or fancied he did; and he was thinking of her now, as his future wife, not only as the woman he loved.

How could that be brought about, how could Kathleen be transformed into a wife to

any man? It would be a transformation certainly, and would require care; for even to the cousin who loved her, she did not seem to have many wifely qualities. He must speak to her warily, not telling his own love so much, as showing he knew hers—that thus, or somehow, he might gain a mastery over her.

Then as Sandy drew nearer to his goal, Tom O'Grady's rooms, the difficulties that lay in his path presented themselves more forcibly before him. This was not the first time he had knelt to Kathleen, actually knelt to her, and prayed her to break off an engagement with another man, and he had been refused then; should he be refused again now? Oh, but she loved him now, it was absurd to think that she, loving him, and hearing he loved her, could still persist in cutting her own throat by marrying another man whom she did not love, and was not

even such a good *parti*. Yes, consciously or unconsciously, Sandy thought a good deal of his newly-acquired wealth during that short drive; he had never valued it before, but he valued it now: for he knew it would have its weight with Kathleen. And yet he loved her—loved her utterly, and knew that she loved him. Still it was on his fortune that he was most relying, as the hansom drew up at his uncle Tom O'Grady's door.

It had never entered into Sandy's calculations that Kathleen might not be at home; and now he was not disappointed, Kathleen was at home. He tossed a gold piece to his driver, and without waiting to hear the man's astonishment, went quickly up the stairs, and not giving the servant time to announce him, walked quickly on into his uncle's sitting-room. His uncle was not there, but at the far end of it sat Kathleen, with her bonnet

on, and her gloves lying beside her, dressed ready to go out, but apparently at this moment writing a note. She started violently on seeing her cousin, and rising and taking up her gloves, made as though she would leave the room.

"You want my uncle?" she said.

But Sandy placed himself between her and the door. "No, I have come to see you to-day, Kathleen."

Then Kathleen did not attempt any further to leave the room, but shrank back at once, as if she wished to be as far as possible from her cousin; and so shrinking, she went to the window, and then stood there looking out, as if she did not care even to look at him. Sandy followed her at once, and again placed himself before her. "Will you not shake hands with me, Kathleen? Are we not friends now?"

"Say rather acquaintances," she replied,

just glancing at him, and then quickly looking away again; "or perhaps cousins, that is colder still."

"Certainly, we are cousins," replied Sandy, rather taken aback by her manner; but though he held out his hand, she did not offer to take it, remaining resolutely turned away, looking out of the window.

"I thought you were in Norway," she said after a moment or two, still without looking round.

"I have just arrived from there this morning."

"You meant to stay away longer, surely?" and Kathleen now moved away from the window, and threw herself into a low easy-chair, and looked at Sandy.

"Yes," said he, "I only came back because I heard of this—this——"

"Marriage of mine," she said, contemptuously.

"I cannot call it marriage, Kathleen," cried Sandy meeting her gaze, and looking at her very earnestly.

"Cannot you? I do not know what it is to be called then," and she laughed bitterly.

"You cannot really mean to marry the Count Manfredi."

"Cannot I? Why should I not marry whom I like?" she asked, but she moved uneasily under Sandy's eye.

"Whom you like, yes. But you do not like the Count."

"I never said I did; but why should I not marry him still? that is to say, if I chose."

"Your mother can tell you that better than I can," said Sandy, very gravely.

"That being the case, I wonder you came all the way from Norway to tell me what you now say my *mother* can explain to me better than you can."

"Because, though she can tell you better, and I am sure she has told you, and you know it perfectly yourself without any telling, yet I recollect my aunt of old, and though she has always loved you—more than most mothers love their daughters, I should think—yet she has a way of putting things not always so kind——"

"I do not care to hear mother abused by any one," said Kathleen sitting forward in her chair, and colouring up now. "You must be more of a friend than you are, cousin Sandy, before you attempt to find fault with mother;" and she looked defiantly at him.

"Indeed, Kathleen, I am sorry if I hurt your feelings. I recollect the time when you would have spoken to me more openly."

"That was long ago," said Kathleen, and again turned away from him, and looked out of the window, but she did not rise from her

chair now. So Sandy was not so much discouraged as he might have been, and wishing to show that he was determined to talk the matter out with her, he now drew forward a chair for himself, and sat down beside her.

"Well, be it so," he said, "I do not wish to talk about my aunt now. What we have got to talk of is the Count Manfredi."

"I will thank you not to mention his name to me."

"Unfortunately I must mention it. It is not likely that I should not do all in my power to break off your engagement with the Count, seeing that, as I said before, I have come all the way from Norway on purpose."

"Very kind of you, I am sure."

"Kathleen, why do you wish to marry the Count?" Sandy had drawn very near to her now, and he spoke in a softer tone than he had used yet. "Why he wants to marry

you I take for granted, he loves you of course, but——"

"But I never told you he did."

"Why otherwise should he seek to marry you, though? what other reason could he have? He cannot surely think that you are rich?"

"I don't know, I am sure." Then after a pause she added, as if to herself, and hardly meaning her cousin to hear her. "*He* is I know, and that is enough for me."

"You mean you are ready to marry for money, Kathleen; for money and a title?"

"Oh, the title is nothing," she said, impatiently. "What do titles signify? As for money, that is different I grant you. Money is the one thing I have yet discovered that one cannot possibly get on without. One can get on without love, without happiness, but get on without money one cannot.

You think I discovered that long ago, cousin Sandy?" she said, glancing up at him again.

"Yes, and I think you are mistaken."

"Mistaken!" she laughed. "Because you have got riches you don't know how, you despise them. But *we* must do something to earn them, *nous autres*, and then we value them at the price we may have paid for them."

"And that price is yourself in this instance?"

No answer.

"You are ready to sell yourself to a man whom you do not love, and who you do not seem to be sure loves you, simply because he has money? Is that so, Kathleen?" Again no answer, but the face was quite averted now, and Sandy could only see the red flush upon her neck. If he had been less excited himself, he might have seen her chest heave, but he did not, and he went

on again. "That being the case, I suppose you would at least prefer going to the highest bidder. The Count Manfredi is rich, but I am richer still; so if you are to be bought, let me buy you, Kathleen."

"You!" and Kathleen turned round in her chair, and fronted him in her wrath.

"Yes, if you are to go to the highest bidder, why should not I bid for you as well as another."

"You always loved to insult me, Sandy. I see you are not changed in that, whatever you may be in other things;" and she rose as if to leave him, but he motioned to her to sit down again, and somehow, she knew not why, she obeyed him, flinging herself back in her chair, and looking angrily at him, with her eyes gleaming, and her face on fire.

"I do not see that I am insulting you, Kathleen. You say yourself that money is

worth more than anything, and I offer you money."

"And you think I would marry you because of your money?"

"No, not only because of my money. Because you love me as well."

"Sandy!" And she rose again in her chair, and made a gesture as if to forbid him to speak thus to her; but he did not heed her forbiddal.

"Yes," he said, "I know it now. I know you love me. Your mother has told me, and your friend, and I have seen it for myself. I know you love me. Why should you wear that bracelet if you did not?"

She was unclasping it, from mere force of habit, and now, paralyzed by his words, she forgot to clasp it again, and it fell from her arm and rolled along the floor. Sandy stooped to pick it up, but even as he did so, Kathleen rose from her seat and flung herself

upon her knees before him. "Oh, spare me —spare me," she cried; "for God's sake, spare me, Sandy!"

He raised her from the ground, and she sat down again, and took the bracelet which he handed back to her; but as she did so, she looked at the photograph he had given her so long ago, and her chest heaved convulsively, and her colour came and went as she panted for breath.

"Why should I spare you?" said Sandy. "A minute ago you were ready to marry the Count Manfredi."

"No—no—I was not!" she cried, still panting, and with the tears beginning to fall from her large, glorious eyes; "but if I had been, you have nothing to reproach me with, for you do not love me. Oh, you never loved me really," and a sob gave added force to her words; "for you to talk of buying me!"

"I had rather see you my wife than any other man's," he replied quietly enough; though it cut him to the heart to see her so much moved, and he longed to tell her all. "And if you are to be bought, I prefer to be the buyer myself, for I did love you once, Kathleen."

"Not now—not now!" she said, bitterly, and she pressed her hands to her face, and crushed back the bright golden hair, and then looked at him very steadily. "If you had, it might all have been different; but I understand you, cousin Sandy, you are still the same as ever, and you do not wish me to be miserable, so you would save me from another because you think you would understand better how to make me happy. It is for my sake that you offer to buy me for your wife."

"I had rather see you my wife than any other man's," repeated Sandy. He

was confused by those large, beautiful eyes gazing at him, as though they were reading his inmost thoughts, and he could think of no other way of expressing himself, but after a moment he added, "for I love you a little still, Kathleen," and he bent down over her, and would have taken hold of her hand.

But she pushed his hand away.

"Sandy!" she cried, "oh, say you do not love me. Say you do not; oh, for God's sake, Sandy!" and she looked up at him imploring, supplicating, and more beautiful than he had ever seen her before.

So, at least, Sandy thought, as he replied: "But I cannot say that, Kathleen, for I love you just as much as ever; only better, as a man's love must always be better than a boy's. I have always loved you, my beautiful, my darling;" and he would have drawn her to him and kissed

her, only there was something in her face that stopped him. He did not know what it was, but it stopped him. He had expected that she would have thrown herself into his arms, and hidden her face upon his shoulder, and that then—then there could never again be any more misunderstanding between them.

It had been nothing but a misunderstanding; they had always loved each other. But she did not fall into his arms; she did not hide her face upon his shoulder: she sat quite still, gazing, staring at him with those large, grand eyes rooted upon his face, devouring it, as it were. He had bent over her, and now she just raised her hands, and laying them upon his shoulders, held him off from her, looking at him still.

"Do you mean you love me, Sandy?" But there was no need for her to ask, she

saw it in his eyes; and with one sudden effort she pushed him from her.

"Oh, why did you come too late?" she cried, as if in anger; "why did you come too late? Oh, my God! my God! Why did you wait till I was married?"

"Married!" and in one instant the expression of Sandy's face had changed, and he was white as marble, and almost as rigid. "Married to the Count?"

"No, no; not to the Count, thank heaven. Why do you talk of the Count? It is to Killowen, my cousin. I married him this morning."

Sandy stood and looked at her; he did not utter one word, but he looked at her, and Kathleen understood that look, and she forced herself to be calm: he was so calm, so terribly calm.

"I had no one to help me, you were

in Norway, and you were no longer my friend; and I had quarrelled with mother, and I had no one; and I could not marry the Count," she shuddered at the thought; "so I wrote to Killowen, and told him all. Indeed, indeed I told him all; I did not pretend I loved him. I only told him he might have me if he wished, but that he must not tell mother. I would not go back to her, like a penitent child, and be scolded and forgiven, and then taken off to St. George's. I would not make it up till all was over, then, if she wished to be friends, I should be quite ready. And he was very generous and very noble. You need not look at me like that, Sandy; I never said I loved him; but he was very generous, and he said if I would marry him, and would not make it up with mother first, I had best marry him at once: so we were married this morning, and now—— Oh,

you are not going, Sandy; you would not leave me in this way, surely?"

"In what way should I leave you, Kathleen?" asked Sandy, in a harsh grating voice, brushing off her hand, for she had risen and laid it upon his shoulder, seeking to detain him.

Then, she covered her face with her hands, and rocked herself in her anguish, while her breath came in long agonized gasps, but no sob rose to relieve her misery. Sandy looked at her, and a mist came over his eyes. He held out his hand, "Good-bye, Kathleen, God forgive you, and grant you may be happy!"

"Happy, Sandy," and she uncovered her face, and looked at him. So beautiful she looked with her burning cheeks, and large tearful eyes, and the golden glory of her hair hanging loose and disordered about her face so beautiful, that Sandy could not but pause

to look at her for a moment, but that did not make him forgive her. He could not forgive all at once, he had been too bitterly disappointed, and he turned and went. But Kathleen hurried after him, she was wild now, desperate, she fell on the ground at his feet, and clasping his knees with her hands, looked up at him.

"One kiss before you go, Sandy; oh, kiss me once, only once."

But Sandy's face grew more rigid than ever, as he looked down at her.

"You are Lord Killowen's wife now, Kathleen, do not disgrace yourself and him." And he gave her his hand to raise her up, but she would not be raised up, so Sandy turned and left the room, and Kathleen fell forward upon the floor, and could have shrieked for very agony, but still she uttered no sound, for she was past that now.

She had brought it upon herself. She

might have been Sandy's wife, if she had but waited. She had been almost sure of it from the first moment that he entered the room; she knew it now, and she was married to Lord Killowen.

END OF VOL. I.

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